Never Forget: How Public Memory of the Holocaust Is Displayed in Holocaust Museums and Memorials in Florida

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NEVER FORGET: HOW PUBLIC MEMORY OF THE HOLOCAUST IS DISPLAYED IN
HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS AND MEMORIALS IN FLORIDA

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the similarities and differences between Florida’s Holocaust museums and memorials and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The purpose of this study is to illustrate how each institution is a reflection of its local community and how that reflection is based on each institution’s perceived audience. Holocaust awareness grew in the United States over the last sixty years, culminating in the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993. Since its opening the museum has served as a template for other museums on how to define the Holocaust and promote education. Museums in Florida that have opened post-1993 contain elements that are reminiscent of the national museum. At the same time, they are designed in a way that best represents the audience that each institution reaches. This thesis uses newspapers, institutional records, interviews, and the physical examination of the memorials and museums themselves, to analyze the creation of public memory. These institutions of Holocaust memory in Florida have created a sense of place for survivors and their loved ones. They are also places to honor the memory of the people whose lives were lost. Lastly, they are permanent fixtures that ensure that the story of the Holocaust will not be forgotten by future generations.
INTRODUCTION

Only guard yourself and guard your soul carefully, lest you forget the things your eyes saw, and lest these things depart your heart all the days of your life, and you shall make them known to your children, and to your children's children. Deuteronomy 4:9

The horrific events that occurred in Europe between 1933 and 1945, otherwise known as the Holocaust, has become, in the last forty years, an historic event to be memorialized in many major cities around the world. Museums and memorials in the United States dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust boomed in the 1980s and 1990s in an effort to educate younger and future generations on the horrors of the past in an attempt to recognize and prevent them from being repeated in the future. This rise in the number of institutions dedicated to the public memory and commemoration of the Holocaust has given rise to a debate about memory itself and the role of the American narrative in the display of Holocaust memory at these sites. With the opening of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1993, a national bar was set, so to speak, that established the framework within which all subsequent Holocaust museums could follow as an example; and follow they did in the case of Florida’s Holocaust museums. However, despite following the same timeline and thematic displays of the Holocaust in their permanent exhibitions, these museums reached out to their local communities, communities that were populated with large numbers of Jewish families and Holocaust survivors, who donated their relics from the Holocaust to be included in the museum. These museums have, accordingly, created a site of public memory that is representative of their respective region and have become an important tool for Holocaust education in local schools.

Museums, however, are not the only sites of Holocaust memory in Florida. A large memorial dedicated to the memory of the Jewish victims of the Holocaust can be found in Miami Beach. This memorial contains both an historical account of the Holocaust and an artistic representation of the Holocaust that is both commemorative and educational. The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach is a reflective place for survivors and families of victims to remember what happened and to pay respect to the people they lost, while at the same time it is an educational site that teaches thousands of people, many of them school children, each year about the effects of unchecked racism and discrimination. Together the Holocaust Memorial and the four other Holocaust museums in Florida stand as commemorative and educational
institutions that are invaluable to each of their communities. Because survivors play such an important role in the creation and development of these sites, the public memory that is displayed there is more about Jewish Americans and their history and less about the national narrative of the United States’ role in the Holocaust.

**The Rise in National Holocaust Awareness: From the 1950s through the early 1990s**

Public awareness of the Holocaust began to take form as an American public memory in the early 1950s. Alan Mintz chronicles the rise of Holocaust awareness in the United States by examining the different types of media through which the Holocaust was presented to the American public in his book, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*. ¹ Consciousness of the Holocaust first began to rise among the American public with the publication of Anne Frank’s, *The Diary of a Young Girl*, in 1952.² Anne’s *Diary* was so popular that it was then turned into a Broadway play in 1956 and later adapted for a Hollywood movie in 1959. In 1960, Elie Wiesel’s account of his Holocaust experience, *Night*, was published and brought the horrors of concentration camps to the American public. Since then both Anne Frank and Elie Wiesel’s work have become required reading for many school children and is often their first introduction to the Holocaust.

The well-publicized capture and trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1960-1961 confirmed the horrors of the Holocaust to the American people and raised the status of the Holocaust in the American collective memory of World War II.³ The Six Day War in the Middle East in 1967 that threatened to “wipe Israel off the map” caused a lot of anxiety among American Jews who feared another Holocaust would occur and mobilized into action.⁴ Israel won the war and assuaged fears of another Holocaust, however, the event brought the Holocaust even further into the realm of public discourse in the U.S. An additional catalyst was the NBC television mini-series, *Holocaust*; a four-part, 9 ½ hour program that aired in April of 1978. Approximately 100 million Americans watched all or parts of the mini-series which, according to historian Peter

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² Ibid., 17.
³ Ibid., 12.
Novick, imparted “more information about the Holocaust…to more Americans over those four nights than over all the preceding thirty years.”

During that same year, on the thirtieth anniversary of the creation of Israel—and two weeks after Holocaust had aired on national television, President Jimmy Carter announced the establishment of the President’s Commission on the Holocaust. The President’s Commission was charged to research the feasibility of a national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, “with respect to…the creation and maintenance of the memorial through contributions by the American people, and to recommend appropriate ways for the nation to commemorate… ‘Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust.’” After years of planning and design, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) finally opened to the public in April of 1993, thereby becoming a national institution for not only the memorialization of the Nazis’ victims, but for the education of Americans nation-wide.

As further evidence of the mainstreaming of the Holocaust as a public memory, in December of 1993, Schindler’s List debuted in American theaters and in the following year, it swept the Oscars, just as the mini-series Holocaust swept the Emmy Awards in 1978. By now Holocaust memory had reached the center of American public memory and has continued to remain there over the years since then. This movement of Holocaust consciousness from the periphery to the center of American public memory can also be attributed to the gradual increase in mandated Holocaust education across the country.

The 1980s and the Expansion of the Holocaust Denial Movement

At the same time that national awareness of the Holocaust grew, a new movement of Holocaust denial developed. Deborah Lipstadt chronicles the history of Holocaust Denial movement in her book, Denying the Holocaust: The Growing Assault on Truth and Memory. There was a small denial movement immediately following World War II, however it existed among fringe groups whose extremist beliefs were strongly rooted in their anti-Semitism than on any historical evidence. In the late 1970s Holocaust denial moved into the mainstream with the

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5 Ibid., 209.
7 Novick, 214.
The publication of The Hoax of the Twentieth Century by Arthur Butz, an electrical engineering professor at the prestigious Northwestern University. The structure of Butz’s book gave it the appearance of a legitimate scholarly work, with its extensive notes and bibliography and acknowledgement of various research centers and archives. On the surface Butz’s work appeared to be a serious scholarly work that was critical of Nazi anti-Semitism and differed from previous forms of Holocaust denial literature however the content remained the same. The establishment of the Institute for Historical Review (IHR) in 1978 also gave a legitimate façade for Holocaust deniers to use as a platform to disseminate their material that denies the Holocaust. As the Holocaust denial movement rose in the late 1970s and 1980s, people began establishing Holocaust museums and memorials throughout the country in response.

In light of such people who claim that the Holocaust did not happen, or that there were no gas chambers or crematoriums, sites of Holocaust memory have become imperative. Similarly, the education of today’s youth is more important now than ever since the internet is such a powerful tool for research. Organizations such as the Institute for Historical Review, who also publish their own journal, The Journal of Historical Review, present themselves as a legitimate academic organization, when in reality it is the moniker they hide behind in order to espouse their anti-Semitic views and theories on how and why the Holocaust did not happen. With such false material just a click away, and under such false pretenses that makes them appear legitimate, it is more important now than ever to educate the public, especially young adults and children, about what happened during the Holocaust to help preserve its memory and to ensure that such atrocities are never repeated.

Yad Vashem and the Development of Holocaust Museums Worldwide

Yad Vashem, the world’s foremost commemorative and educational institution on the Holocaust, was established in 1953 in Jerusalem, Israel. Since its founding over half a century

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9 Ibid., 123.
ago, Yad Vashem has been dedicated to what they call the four pillars of remembrance: commemoration, documentation, research, and education about the Holocaust.\textsuperscript{11} Yad Vashem has since expanded since its founding to become the largest Holocaust museum in the world.

To date there are currently sixty-two Holocaust museums and memorials worldwide, twenty-five of which are located in the United States.\textsuperscript{12} Thirteen of the U.S. museums were established prior to the USHMM in 1993 (two of them in Florida) and over half of that number was established in the 1980s. In the 1990s, following the USHMM’s dedication in 1993, eight more museums established themselves in the U.S. and another three were founded between 2001 and 2003.\textsuperscript{13} These numbers show that approximately one-third of the Holocaust museums in America were founded during the same time that the Holocaust denial movement began entering the more mainstream social and academic circles. This fact serves as evidence that people combated the increase of Holocaust denial in America by increasing the number of public sites dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust.

\textbf{The 1994 Holocaust Education Bill}

Along with the increase of Holocaust museums and memorials in the United States, there was a rise in the development of Holocaust education in public schools. Holocaust education is not mandated in every state in the U.S., but there are several with Holocaust education legislation on the books and several others that have legislation establishing task forces and commissions on Holocaust education. Prior to Florida’s Holocaust Education mandate in 1994, only three states had legislation in regards to requiring Holocaust education in school curriculum; those states were California, New Jersey, and Washington.\textsuperscript{14} Five states, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, and Nevada, had commissions or task forces established which encouraged Holocaust education in the classroom and provided resources for teachers, but did not mandate lessons.\textsuperscript{15} Presently, there are twenty-eight states that have neither state-mandated Holocaust

\begin{thebibliography}{10}
\bibitem{13} Ibid.
\bibitem{15} Ibid.
\end{thebibliography}
legislation, nor a state sponsored Holocaust resource for teachers, such as a task force or commission.\footnote{Ibid.}

In Florida, Governor Lawton Chiles signed a Holocaust education bill into law in April of 1994. At the time the bill was signed into law, there was a Holocaust center and a Holocaust memorial, both located in south Florida, and one Holocaust museum located in the Tampa Bay area. The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, currently located in Hollywood, played a pivotal role in the development and passage of the Holocaust Education Bill, and together along with the other Holocaust institutions in Florida, became a local resource for students and educators. These institutions worked with educators to help with the development and implementation of Holocaust curriculum in order to comply with the new state mandate.

Prior to the 1994 Holocaust Education Bill, it was not required for schools to teach about the Holocaust. In fact, most school boards did not have a Holocaust curriculum at all.\footnote{Terry Neal, “Holocaust Education Bill Advances,” \textit{The Miami Herald}, 17 March 1994, 7B.} Between 1984 and 1994, Rositta Kenigsberg, the Executive Director at the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, helped write the bill and lobbied the legislature to mandate the teaching of Holocaust education in public schools.\footnote{Rositta Kenigsberg, in a telephone interview with the author, November 25, 2009.} Many supporters backed the Holocaust Education Bill as a further testament to the Jewish adage, “never forget.” Many supporters of the bill also cited recent surveys that showed a large number of high school students had never heard of the Holocaust.\footnote{Herald Staff, “Strange Bedfellows Indeed,” \textit{The Miami Herald}, 1 April 1994, 16A.} Also cited, was a 1987 book, \textit{What Do Our 17-Year-Olds Know}, that discovered about 75.8 percent of eleventh graders across the country had heard of the Holocaust, but only 57.5 percent could define it.\footnote{Terry Neal, “Holocaust Education Bill Advances,” \textit{The Miami Herald}, 17 March 1994, 7B.} The bill was supported and sponsored by Senators Ron Silver and Ron Klein and House Representatives Elaine Bloom and Fred Lippman.

Although Florida’s 1994 Holocaust Education Bill passed unanimously, the idea met some resistance in the legislative process. According to Congressman Ron Klein, former Florida House Representative who co-wrote the bill with Rositta Kenigsberg, this bill would not have been able to pass if it were not for the Holocaust being on the forefront of people’s minds due to the recent popularity of Steven Spielberg’s film, \textit{Schindler’s List}. Congressman Klein believed that students all over Florida needed to know about the Holocaust, but there was no sufficient
level of education or standardized curriculum regarding it in the state. While no one in the House or Senate out right opposed the bill, they also would not hear it or push it forward. Many officials felt that there were enough mandates on schools already and they needed less regulation not more. When Congressman Klein heard Spielberg’s acceptance speech at the 1994 Academy Awards that education is the way to prevent history from repeating itself and to learn from it, Congressman Klein called him for help. None of the movie theaters in Tallahassee showed Schindler’s List, so Congressman Klein called the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House to set up a screening of the film with the help of Spielberg; only forty percent of the legislature showed up. 21 Spielberg also spoke out publicly in favor of the bill and encouraged the legislature to pass it. The bill finally made its way out of committee hearings and was put up before the Senate and the House where it was passed unanimously. 22

In May 1994 the Holocaust Education Bill, Statute 1003.42, was signed into law by Governor Lawton Chiles. The bill, FS 1003.42, officially titled, “Required Holocaust Education Mandate Public School Instruction,” states:

The history of the Holocaust (1933-1945), the systematic, planned annihilation of European Jews and other groups by Nazi Germany, a watershed event in the history of humanity, to be taught in a manner that leads to an investigation of human behavior, an understanding of the ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping, and an examination of what it means to be a responsible and respectful person, for the purposes of encouraging tolerance of diversity in a pluralistic society and for nurturing and protecting democratic values and institutions. 23

Following the signing of this bill, an article in the St. Petersburg Times reported that, “Government officials and Jewish leaders who attended the bill-signing ceremony at Miami Beach City Hall said revisionists who argue the Holocaust didn’t happen would continue to spread untruths if schools failed to teach younger generations of the genocide.” 24

As a result of this mandate, the Commissioner of Education created a Task Force on Holocaust Education and appointed members to serve on the Commission. The responsibility of the Task Force is to serve as “an advisory group to the Commissioner of Education and

21 Mira Kogen Resnick (Legislative Director for Congressman Ron Klein), in a telephone interview with the author, April 23, 2010.  
22 Audio Tapes SB 660 1994 Session Law #94-114, Florida State Archives.  
24 Nicole Winfield, “Chiles Signs Bill to Teach the Holocaust in Schools,” St. Petersburg Times, 30 April 1994, 4B.
coordinates Holocaust education activities on his behalf.” More specifically, the Task Force is charged with assisting school professionals in gaining the information and teaching materials to teach the Holocaust in a classroom environment.

The Task Force on Holocaust Education has its own website that includes a list of, along with links to the websites of, Florida institutions that offer Holocaust teacher training programs during the summer for educators. The Task Force commissioned the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center in South Florida to write the first state-wide resource manuals for teachers for grades K-3, 4-6, and 9-12. Together with a manual for grades 7-8, they were distributed to all private, public, and parochial schools in the state.

Variations in Holocaust Memory

Since the early 1990s, there has been significant literature written on the various aspects of Holocaust memory and its memorialization in the United States. The different aspects that are discussed here include how the memory of the Holocaust varies by place, time, and individual, as well as the different ways in which Holocaust memory can be presented to the public. Another aspect that is discussed here looks at the arguments about the Americanization of the Holocaust in U.S. museums and the perceived saturation of the Holocaust in American society. These discussions highlight the contentious nature of how to present the Holocaust to public audiences.

James E. Young discusses how the memory of the Holocaust is displayed in various memorials around the world in his book, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. Of the hundreds of Holocaust memorials in existence around the world, Young focused on a select few in Europe and the United States. Young theorizes that Holocaust memorials are shaped by several factors depending on the political, cultural, and historical context of that society. Each memorial presents its own version of Holocaust memory that is affected by the time, place, and people involved in constructing the memorial. Young finds that Holocaust memorials are representative of the community in which it was built and is a reflection of the society that it represents. The memory of the Holocaust is told differently

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27 Ibid.
around the world due to factors such as the ruling government, victim involvement in the memorial process, the time in which it is created (how many years have gone by since the event), where specifically the memorial is located (how far removed from the site of the event it is), what the goal of the memorial is, and what the community’s needs are for such a memorial. Young also notes that memorials can change over time to reflect the new collective memory of the event because memory is not stagnant; it too changes with time based again on those external factors that help shape memory to reflect the current times and all that has changed which affects the collective memory of the event.29

The issue of memory in regards to the public presentation of the Holocaust is examined further by Michael Bernard-Donals in his book, *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust*. In this book the author examines how first hand witness memory of the Holocaust is reliant on the events that the individual finds to be the most important to them.30 Bernard-Donals also makes a case that the very nature of remembrance is susceptible to forgetfulness which can become problematic when defining public memory of the Holocaust. The inherent problem of individual memory is its vulnerability to forgetfulness which, according to Bernard-Donals, is the one area where Holocaust deniers can make a pseudo-valid argument against their testimony.31 What Bernard-Donals calls “forgetful memory” is the traumatic effect of viewing a photograph or other visual representation of an event, which then disturbs the collective memory or historical knowledge of the object being viewed.32 Instead of depicting knowledge of the event, these images evoke an emotion that is not a part of that person’s memory, and thereby upsets their knowledge of the event in their memory and cannot be remembered accurately. Historical literature can also provide insight beyond the collective memory of an event which can produce that same feeling of forgetful memory of an event that was not experienced, but understood all the same for the emotion it evokes. In the case of Holocaust memory, images and artifacts from the event can trigger powerful emotional responses that may not necessarily reflect that person’s memory of the event accurately, but is still an essential part of the larger collective memory of the event.

29 Ibid., 1-15.
31 Ibid., 7.
32 Ibid., 5.
Tim Cole looks at some of the same issues of Holocaust representation that James Young examined in *The Texture of Memory* and draws some similar conclusions. Cole’s book, *Selling the Holocaust: From Auschwitz to Schindler—How History is Bought, Packaged, and Sold*, explores the business of representing the Holocaust and presenting it to the public. In this book Cole examines how the Holocaust is defined differently in other countries, representing the different national narratives of the event. Cole refers to the “myth of the Holocaust” in his examination of how and why the Holocaust has emerged at the end of the twentieth century as an icon in the West. Cole uses the term “myth of the Holocaust” to distinguish between the historical event of the Holocaust and the representation of the Holocaust in the last fifty years. With the popularity of the Holocaust in popular culture in the last few decades he argues, there appears to be less critical understanding of the historical event of the Holocaust and more just a general understanding that the Holocaust was a terrible event that needs to be remembered. *Selling the Holocaust* finds that not only does Holocaust representation vary by place, but also by time. Like Young, Cole finds that Holocaust institutions say more about the times in which they were established than about the Holocaust itself, however he believes that they should not be altered to reflect new changes in memory or national narrative as that changes their original context. For example, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum says more about how America in the 1990s remembered the Holocaust than about the Holocaust itself, just as the old Yad Vashem says as much about how 1970s Israel remembered the Holocaust than the actual event, and so on and so forth.

**Representing Holocaust Memory**

Moving away from the discussion of memory itself and looking more specifically at how that memory is presented to the public, Gary Weissman studies how individuals who have an interest in Holocaust studies but were non-witnesses to the Holocaust have a strong desire to experience the horror of the Holocaust themselves in his book *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*. Weissman looks at the writings of Elie Wiesel, videotapes of survivor testimony, and the films *Schindler’s List* and *Shoah* and their popularity among non-witnesses in their efforts to experience the horror of the Holocaust. Although Weissman does

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34 Ibid., 177-183.
not look at museums or memorials specifically, he recognizes that they too are formats that attempt to bring the horror of the Holocaust to these non-witnesses in order to give them a more experiential visit.³⁵ Weissman believes, as many others do, that only those who participated in the Holocaust can know the horror of it and that the more removed from the event we are by time and space the further Holocaust memory moves away from public memory of it. The concept of presenting the Holocaust as a confrontation with horror, as Weissman’s examples in his book do, and having this confrontation authenticate the experience of the Holocaust is not what the author questions. Weissman examines why this feeling of horror is the end all result of experiencing the Holocaust from a non-witness perspective. As Weismann concludes, feeling duly horrified by the Holocaust does not equate a historical and moral understanding of the event, and it is in the absence of horror that the Holocaust can be reflected upon and represented in a way that brings the memory of the event closer to reality.³⁶

Taking a different approach to the discussion of public presentation of Holocaust memory, Andrea Tyndall argues in her article, “Memory Authenticity, and Replication of the Shoah in Museums: Defensive Tools of the Nation,” that history as it is presented in museums is an art and the education of the Holocaust, and genocide in general, is political.³⁷ Tyndall explains that the same values that are promoted in Holocaust education are the same political values that are needed in today’s transnational world. In regards to her assertion that history in museums is art, Tyndall argues that museums are structured in the same manner as a novel with an interesting plot and despite a museum’s intent, the exhibit has to be able to capture the attention of the visitor. Tyndall explores the multi-functional purposes of Holocaust museums: as monument, tourist attraction, and educational center, but it is this function of an educational center that she explores most thoroughly. In the case of Holocaust museums and memorials whose primary mission is educative, these sites should be assessed as an educational institution and take into account their social, cultural, economic, and national agendas. The Holocaust, Tyndall concludes, has become a point of reference that symbolizes the relationship between the community and the State.³⁸

³⁶ Ibid., 216.
³⁸ Ibid., 117.
The Americanization of the Holocaust

An issue that is frequently brought up when discussing the presentation of Holocaust memory in America is the Americanization of it. This Americanization refers to both the frequent use of the American history narrative in the presentation of Holocaust memory and the increasing awareness of the Holocaust among the American collective consciousness. Hilene Flanzbaum discusses the rise of Holocaust consciousness in America in her essay, “Introduction: The Americanization of the Holocaust.” In this essay Flanzbaum explains that each instance of increasing Holocaust awareness gives way to a greater debate about the Americanization of the Holocaust among scholars. This Americanization of the Holocaust, Flanzbaum concludes, has made the Holocaust an artifact of American culture. Flanzbaum looks at how the Holocaust has permeated American culture in the last fifty years and become, by the 1990s, a part of the American common language and collective memory. Flanzbaum’s essay looks closer at how the Holocaust has, in her opinion, become saturated in American culture rather than analyzing the particular way in which the Holocaust has been Americanized in its presentation to the American people. This essay also notes the explosion of Holocaust material in both academia and popular culture in the 1990s, the reason for which can be attributed to several factors, the largest being the recognition of the dwindling survivor population. The Holocaust’s perceived saturation into mainstream American culture and its place in the American collective memory has resulted in heated discussion among scholars and survivors of the Holocaust about the sacredness and inherent uniqueness of the Holocaust which becomes lost as Americans become more familiar with it.

The Americanization of the Holocaust is discussed thoroughly by Peter Novick in his book, The Holocaust in American Life. In it Novick explores how the Holocaust, in his opinion, has moved from the periphery to the center of American culture. Novick also examines the question of what is the Holocaust’s exact place within the framework of American society. Novick takes a critical and pessimistic view of the recent rise in Holocaust awareness and its newfound place in American life as he documents how over time, the Holocaust transitioned

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40 Ibid., 4-5.
from the margins of American society to, what he sees as its current place in the center of it all.\textsuperscript{41} In regards to memorializing the Holocaust, Novick believes that museums are at the very least un-ignorable as opposed to monuments which tend to fade into the urban landscape.\textsuperscript{42} However, when it comes to the museum as an education center with its mission to teach the lessons of the Holocaust to future generations, Novick believes this to be an unattainable goal. What Novick concludes in this book is that the Holocaust is too large in all of its many complexities and too far removed from its time and place to have any place in American culture.\textsuperscript{43}

**Collective Memory and Public History: The Museum’s Role in American Society**

According to scholars of public history, the role of the local museum in American society is to be a place that provides a strong sense of community first and second, sometimes helps relate local history to that of the larger national narrative. The importance of local museums in this regard is discussed in a collection of essays edited by Amy K. Levin, *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*.\textsuperscript{44} The essays in this book all reveal the similar theme that local museums are a reflection of their community in one aspect or another. This same theme is observed in the case of local Holocaust museums in Florida.

Katherine Corbett and Howard Miller witnessed firsthand how visitors seek out exhibits and artifacts that they can relate to their own past and how that connection creates a more successful exhibit in their article, “A Shared Inquiry into Shared Inquiry.” In this article the authors describe the novel method of working collaboratively with the public to create a successful historical exhibit; successful meaning the public not only enjoyed the exhibit, but also discerned the historians’ broader message of the exhibit as a whole. In other words, not only would the general public see the artifacts that they associated with their own shared memories of events, but also grasped the larger historical significance of said events in the larger historical narrative. The article sheds light on this problem of not only giving the public what they want, but also getting the larger historical message across to the audience. The problem with working with the public, as the authors discovered though, is their desire for a more personal history, one

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 276.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 15.
\textsuperscript{44} Amy K. Levin, ed., *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America’s Changing Communities*, (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2007), 9-25.
that is locally centered, that they can relate to. The historian’s objective however, is to relate that personal experience to the larger historical context of the local community and nation at that time. The goal then of the museum is to successfully combine both the visitor’s desire for a more personal history with the museum’s intent to convey a larger historical context.\textsuperscript{45} The Holocaust museums in Florida attempt to do just that, balance local and national narratives.

The findings of Corbett and Miller’s article are supported by the conclusions found in Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen’s book, \textit{The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life}. Based on the study they conducted for this book, the authors found that the general public desires a more familial knowledge of their past, with little concern for the big picture. Their study showed that while the lay public did actively pursue historical knowledge it was limited to their own desire to identify with their own ancestral past.\textsuperscript{46} Their study also found that people had a greater trust in museums as a source of knowledge, even more than firsthand accounts from relatives.\textsuperscript{47} The results of their study show the need for public historians to relate the public’s personal history with that of the larger historical context of the time. The challenge for the public historian then is to encourage the public to go beyond their own personal history to see how it fits into the larger historical narrative.

According to Rosenzweig and Thelen’s research, the general public has a rather disconnected view of their national history.\textsuperscript{48} It is the job of the public historian to accurately and informatively engage the public to identify their personal past in the grander scheme of history thereby illustrating to them the tangible quality of history that they neglect to recognize due to their prejudice of “Capital H history.”\textsuperscript{49} The argument of these publications is that history needs to feel more personal to the audience it is being disseminated to in order for them to learn and appreciate the knowledge being presented to them. The public audience wants to feel a personal connection with the history they are presented with, not just hard, cold facts. As the Corbett and Miller article and Rosenzweig and Thelen book demonstrate, Americans learn more (or aspire to learn more) from a history they can relate to that is demonstrated through firsthand accounts and personal artifacts, then when it is espoused from second hand scholarly research,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 91.
\item \textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 20.
\item \textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 126.
\end{itemize}
which the general public tends to believe has no personal touches that illustrate the human quality of the history that is being presented. This is exactly what the local Holocaust museums in Florida have attempted to balance with their use of local artifacts and testimony from survivors and their families to tell the larger history of the Holocaust and its relevance to their community today.

The Institutionalization and Memorialization of the Holocaust in Florida

The following chapters document the commemoration and institutionalization of Holocaust memory in Florida and how these sites are representative of their local communities and have created a sense of place for local Holocaust survivors and their families. The framework for which these sites have modeled themselves after is the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. The history of the USHMM and its design and layout of the permanent exhibition, which is discussed in Chapter 1, sets the precedent for subsequent Holocaust museums to follow. This precedent can be seen in the three Holocaust museums that were built in Florida after the USHMM opened in 1993. Chapter 2 chronicles the establishment of local Holocaust museums in Florida and their development over time. Along with the history of these institutions, special attention is paid to their educational programming and, most importantly, the special niche that they have carved for themselves in their respective communities and the active role they have in local Holocaust education and as a local site of public memory for the community. Finally Chapter 3 explores how an artistic, sculptural representation of the Holocaust, the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach, fulfills the same educational and commemorative role in its community that the other Florida Holocaust museums have in theirs.

The sudden increase in Holocaust museums and memorials in the United States in the past thirty years is remarkable. What is presented here is an examination of the development of the memorialization and institutionalization of Holocaust memory throughout Florida and how that development was influenced by the establishment of a national Holocaust narrative in Washington, D.C. Furthermore, these Holocaust institutions in Florida moved beyond the national narrative and looked inward to their own community to reflect the collective memory of the Holocaust there and have become an invaluable local resource for educators, students, survivors, witnesses, and the general public alike.
CHAPTER 1
THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

A Political and Contentious Beginning

Holocaust museums in America have to contend with two major issues when it comes to their creation: how to define the Holocaust in terms that make it relevant to the United States and how to best identify the different groups of the estimated eleven million victims. Trying to define these points and build a cohesive institution that both honors the memory of those who suffered and still provides all the facts for future visitors can sometimes lend itself to controversy. In the case of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C., several controversies existed concerning the nature and structure of the museum and its permanent exhibition, including a debate over the perceived “Americanization” of the Holocaust that is represented in the museum. Contention over issues such as where to locate the museum, which victims should be represented in the museum, and how the museum should be designed were an outgrowth of the original opposition to the museum itself while it was still in the planning stages. Researching the controversies that have surrounded, and in some cases, continue to surround the USHMM is important because it set a precedent that future Holocaust museums in the United States would follow in terms of design layout and victim identification. The creation of the USHMM set new parameters of debate over Holocaust education and memorialization in the U.S., and as a national museum, it became the model for how to display this sensitive subject.

The idea for a museum in Washington, D.C. to memorialize the Holocaust stemmed from a larger study on possible acts of commemoration. Under pressure to respond to criticisms that he was favoring Arab nations over Israel, President Carter established the President’s Commission on the Holocaust in 1978. It was the Commission’s duty to research the feasibility of a national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust, “with respect to…the creation and maintenance of the memorial through contributions by the American people, and to recommend appropriate ways for the nation to commemorate…‘Days of Remembrance of Victims of the
The President’s Commission was made up of thirteen men and women who represented current and former government officials, historians and educators, religious leaders, survivors, writers and commentators, and one person who had directed over proceedings at the Nuremberg Trials. The Commission’s report, which was delivered to the President on September 27, 1979, called for a “living memorial” to be comprised of three components: a memorial/museum, an educational foundation, and a Committee on Conscience. In response to the report, Congress established the United States Holocaust Memorial Council in 1980. The Holocaust Memorial Council was charged with the responsibility for planning, designing, and funding the memorial project.

The museum faced several forms of opposition throughout its planning and development stages. One issue was its proposed location. The federal government donated the land for the museum, 1.9 acres, which would sit adjacent to the National Mall. Part of the reason this location was chosen was because there were two annexes of the Auditor’s Building complex which bore a striking similarity to “concentration camp barracks.” (Unfortunately, the two buildings were deemed inadequate for the amount of space that the museum needed and were demolished.) The location of the museum, on an area considered by many to be a valuable piece of Washington real estate, became a focus of heated contention. Part of the issue of location was related to the subject of the museum.

The vast number of opponents to the USHMM argued that a national museum should be dedicated to a subject of American interest. Some contended that only expressions of celebration should exist on the Mall. Other opponents argued that a Holocaust museum belonged in Europe, not the United States. A popular sentiment for these opponents was that the Holocaust, “was a European experience of German origin.” Opponents also complained that the Holocaust museum took precedence over commemorating the history of persecuted minorities of America,

52 Report to the President: President’s Commission on the Holocaust, 9.
55 Ibid.
such as Native Americans and African-Americans who were still waiting for Congress to allocate space for them on the Mall. As one letter to the editor in the *Washington Post* noted:

That is a special place [the physical location of the memorial museum site] that should be reserved for showing what America has done best. If visitors to Washington must have a reminder of the capacity of government to admit its errors, then a museum of our treatment of the American Indian would be much more appropriate and useful.

Another contributor argued:

The Holocaust is not a part of the American national experience nor of our character as a people. Such a temple of doom and gloom does not belong in one of the nation’s most honored locations…We should not be saddled with this terrible tribute to Europe’s ancient hatreds and to Germany’s cruel and tragic past.

In his chronicle of the creation of the USHMM, historian Edward T. Linenthal explains that the designers had the same fear and, with the help of focus groups, were able to design an exhibit that would “be a ‘good neighbor’ to the other exhibitions on the Mall.” More specifically, as seen in Susan A. Crane’s article, “Memory, Distortion, and History in the Museum,” she explains that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum made “choices regarding the degree rather than the kind of horror which would be exhibited.” At the same time, the USHMM helped articulate that memorializing the Holocaust on the National Mall was appropriate; it was a story that defied geographic and political boundaries.

Other opposition to the Holocaust museum was focused on the politics of the museum’s establishment. Opponents argued that the only reason that President Carter initiated the Commission on the Holocaust was to mend his relationship with the American Jewish community, which had suffered after Carter broke a promise to sell F-15s to Israel. Instead he sold them to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. He also made a comment that Palestinians deserved a

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homeland too, which “disturbed” many members of the American Jewish community.\(^{63}\) Taken together, opponents contended that the museum’s origin was political not educational in nature. Historian Peter Novick argued that although there were a few members of the Carter administration who were genuinely committed to the commemoration of the Holocaust, “the potential political payoff was paramount.”\(^{64}\) According to Novick, Carter believed that he needed to mend his relationship with the American Jewish community because he felt that the loss of their electoral and financial support could result in his defeat in the next presidential election.\(^{65}\)

Determining which victims to memorialize in the museum’s permanent exhibition also became a point of contention in the early developing stages of the museum. The chairman of the President’s Commission and subsequent U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, Elie Wiesel, was the leading figure in this debate. Elie Wiesel was “insistent on the Jewish ‘core’ of the Holocaust,”\(^{66}\) and would remain so throughout his stint as chairman.\(^{66}\) On April 24, 1979, at the first Days of Remembrance service in the Capitol Rotunda, President Carter spoke of his recent visit to Yad Vashem and the “awesome magnitude of the Holocaust.”\(^{67}\) During this speech Carter referred to the “‘sheer weight of its [the Holocaust] numbers—11 million innocent victims exterminated—6 million of them Jews.’”\(^{68}\) This statement thus sparked a contentious debate among those concerned with “the distinctive Jewish dimension of the Holocaust.”\(^{69}\)

In the speech he made at the Rose Garden in 1978 announcing the establishment of the Commission on the Holocaust, President Carter spoke of honoring the six million Jews who perished. In the official executive order that created the commission, Carter referred to the victims of the Holocaust as “those who perished,” a much vaguer statement. Then in the Capitol Rotunda a few months later, he spoke first of the eleven million total victims and then referred distinctively to the six million Jews.\(^{70}\) This inconsistency of victim identification by Carter only

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\(^{63}\) Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 17.
\(^{65}\) Ibid., 216.
\(^{66}\) Linenthal, *Preserving Memory*, 25.
\(^{67}\) Ibid., 26-27.
\(^{68}\) Ibid., 27.
\(^{69}\) Ibid.
\(^{70}\) Ibid.
increased the conviction of others to focus on the “uniqueness of the Jewish experience in the Holocaust.”\footnote{Ibid., 28.}

The battle over the focus of the Holocaust memorial museum dragged out due to Wiesel’s insistence on the Jewish core of the museum and Carter’s wavering statements about whether or not there should be a focus on the Jewish core or the totality of the victims. The issue eventually resolved itself with a compromise. Although the museum’s mandate was officially charged with memorializing the eleven million victims, Wiesel and his allies, other Holocaust survivors on the council, succeeded in focusing the content of the museum’s permanent exhibit being largely devoted to Jewish victims while the other victims received “little more than perfunctory mention in the museum’s permanent exhibit.”\footnote{Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 220.} Instead, the museum uses its temporary space for exhibits on other groups who have been the subject of genocide.

Another group of opponents to the museum consist of Holocaust deniers. This group refuses to accept that the Holocaust was an actual tragic event, claiming that it is merely propaganda. In Peter Novick’s book, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, the evidence of the influence of Holocaust deniers is shown:

Then seemingly powerful evidence of the deniers’ influence was supplied by a public opinion poll conducted for the American Jewish Committee by the Roper Organization. Its results were announced on the eve of the opening of the Washington Holocaust Museum in 1993. Twenty-two percent of the public, according to the poll, doubted that the Holocaust had really occurred.\footnote{Ibid, 270-271.}

To those men and women who deny that the Holocaust occurred, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum stands as a tribute to the truth of the events and to educate those who are misinformed about the history of the Holocaust.

The USHMM exists as a place to remember and as a place to educate. One of the museum’s missions is to attempt to prevent any future occurrences of genocide. The museum’s mission to inform the public’s historical understanding goes beyond just what is found in the permanent exhibition. When the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, drew up its plans for what would become the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum they included plans for an onsite learning center, a program for secondary school teachers, a research library, and an outreach program that includes traveling exhibits. The museum also creates educational

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71 Ibid., 28.
72 Novick, \textit{The Holocaust in American Life}, 220.
resources for distribution.\textsuperscript{74} Hence, the USHMM’s commitment to education and genocide prevention is carried out far beyond the walls of the exhibition space and extends to the visitor further avenues of research and learning beyond what is conveyed in the exhibition space.

A further issue concerning the subject matter of the memorial museum was the “Americanization of the Holocaust,” a term first used by project director Michael Berenbaum, as discussed in James E. Young’s, \textit{The Texture of Memory}.\textsuperscript{75} The term “Americanization” refers to the memorial museum’s consistent representation of the United States’ role, or lack thereof, in the Holocaust. This “Americanization” is a response to challengers of the museum who argued that the Holocaust was irrelevant to the American experience because it was a strictly European event.

President Carter first articulated how the Holocaust was a part of American history in the first Days of Remembrance ceremonies. He argued that American troops were the first to liberate and expose the death camps. Secondly, he contended that Americans needed to take responsibility for not recognizing the Holocaust when it was occurring. Thirdly, he believed that Americans must work to prevent such an atrocity from happening in the future.\textsuperscript{76} Harvey M. Meyerhoff, former chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, stated it best when he said, “Because the Holocaust Memorial is located in the heart of our nation’s capital and because it is a national memorial, the uniquely American dimension of the Holocaust will be consistently represented in the museum.”\textsuperscript{77} In an editorial in the \textit{New York Times}, Jeffrey Beals responded to the claims of Holocaust “Americanization” and defended the national Holocaust museum in his letter to the editor which stated:

\begin{quote}
What American Jewry has at last done is to personalize a catastrophe that has been rapidly spiraling toward distortion. The museum…is indeed a critical vehicle toward understanding the consequences of unchecked prejudice…Only with a permanent view of the calamity of the Holocaust can we make the step from mere knowledge to true understanding.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

By relating the Holocaust to the larger narrative of American history the museum hopes to make genocide an issue Americans will care about preventing.

\textsuperscript{74} United States Holocaust Memorial Council, \textit{A National Commitment to Remember}, (n.p, 1986), 3.
\textsuperscript{75} James E. Young, \textit{The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning}, (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 337.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid, 336.
Proponents for the museum held fast to their belief that such a museum dedicated to the horror that was the Holocaust needed to be in America’s capital for several reasons. The museum aimed to teach the uninformed (or misinformed) public what happened, to show how the United States federal government stood silently by and did nothing to alleviate the Jewish plight in Europe, and simply to stand as a testament to Holocaust deniers that the Holocaust did in fact occur. By achieving all of these objectives, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum played an important role in increasing Holocaust awareness and education across America in the prevention of genocide worldwide.

The museum’s effort to promote worldwide genocide prevention is a result of the Committee on Conscience, which was proposed by the President’s Commission on the Holocaust in 1979. The Committee on Conscience was created by the United States Memorial Council shortly after the museum opened in 1992. It was their task to inform the national government and the American public of genocidal crises throughout the world, and also to allow people to get involved to help. The official mandate of the Committee on Conscience is “to alert the national conscience, influence policy makers, and stimulate worldwide action to confront and work to halt acts of genocide or related crimes against humanity.”

Contrary to the popular notion that the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum can help to prevent such tragedies from happening in the future, historian, Peter Novick, argues that it cannot be done. In his book, *The Holocaust in American Life*, Novick argues:

I’m skeptical about the so-called lessons of history…If there *are* lessons to be extracted from encountering the past, that encounter has to be with the past in all its messiness; they’re not likely to come from an encounter with a past that’s been shaped and shaded so that inspiring lessons will emerge…The desire to find and teach lessons of the Holocaust has various sources…Probably one of its principal sources is the hope of extracting from the Holocaust something that is, if not redemptive, at least useful. I doubt it can be done.

Elie Wiesel, one of the museum’s founders, agreed; he did not believe any redemptive message could be found. If that is the case, then the question becomes about what messages the USHMM’s visitors have taken from the permanent exhibit. Since its opening in 1993 nearly 30 million visitors, almost 9 million of them school children have been to the USHMM. Are the

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visitors walking away with new thoughts about man’s inhumanity to man, or about redemption through future acts of genocide prevention? It’s hard to say without doing a thorough visitor study.

A popular museum education theory explains that visitors can learn different things from the same exhibit based on individual factors such as their own previous education, socioeconomic status, family background, and their movement through the physical space and design of the museum. All of these factors affect how visitors learn and what they learn. Novick argues that people often leave the museum with the same knowledge and opinions they brought to it, but he also admits that his finding was not universal. In Novick’s book, *The Holocaust in American Life*, he cites a few good examples of people interpreting the exhibits according to their own personal contexts:

A “pro-life” visitor reported that the exhibits deepened her conviction that Americans who turn away from the awful reality of what happens in abortion clinics are just like the Germans who averted their eyes from the fate of the Jews. A teacher from an apostolic church school told the students she was shepherding through the museum that if the Jews of Europe had recognized Jesus as the Messiah, “the Lord could have heard their prayers a lot more.”

While these examples illustrated Novick’s point, they also leave room for further research. In these two cases these women were adults whose beliefs were clearly deeply rooted. The reason that museums such as the USHMM focus so heavily on Holocaust education, is that the museum hopes that children will be more receptive to learning about this event on its own terms. The USHMM hopes that visitors will be positively impacted by the lessons and message that the USHMM strives to communicate about the agency of individuals to make choices, including preventing genocide.

**Designing a Holocaust Museum: A Blueprint for Future Museums?**

A commonly held belief about museums is that they are a source of entertainment. While their ability to educate is sometimes doubted, like with Novick, the majority of people do expect

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84 Ibid, 260.
to be taught something when they visit a museum.  

More than just to be taught though, museum visitors have a certain expectation to be entertained while simultaneously learning something new during their visit. This concept is arguably difficult to uphold at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum because of the somber, reflective mood of the museum. Therefore, the educational value must far outweigh the entertainment value of the museum.

Despite the overwhelming popularity of the USHMM there are critics who take issue with the design and layout of the museum. Alison Landsberg notes a common complaint some have about the museum’s design and layout:

The visitor is at the mercy of the museum and must submit oneself to its pace and its logic. There is no way out short of traversing the entire exhibit; one must wind one’s way down all three floors. The architecture and exhibition design conspire to force each visitor to confront images and objects that might, in other museums, be will-fully ignored. Secondly, there are only five places in the entire exhibit where visitors may sit down. The museum is physically and emotionally exhausting and yet insists that one persevere in the face of discomfort.

The design of this museum prohibits the typical flow of visitor traffic in more traditional museums. Instead of visitors choosing what exhibits they want to see and in what order, the Holocaust Museum directs visitors the entire way through the exhibition. While the issue of limited resting places is a common problem in many museums today, in the case of the Holocaust Museum, this is done on purpose. The idea that the visit to this museum should be not only emotionally exhausting but physically exhausting is a way for the museum to further the connection between the visitor and the victims whose story they follow. Again, reference must be made to the sheer number of visitors the museum has had since its opening. If the exhibition is horrifying or exhausting or even, in the opinion of some, irrelevant to American history, then how does one explain the consistently high number of visitors to the museum every year? The answer is simply that despite the graphic and grueling nature of the exhibit, the museum serves as an important educational tool for the general public and a testament of the authenticity of the Holocaust in the face of those who continue to deny it.

As museums in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries shift from the traditional temple format to that of a forum for public discourse, the United States Holocaust Memorial

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Museum epitomizes this new format.\textsuperscript{88} Even more so, the USHMM is, as Landsberg labels it, an experiential museum. Landsberg goes on to explain that:

The American public seems to be increasingly drawn to experiential mass cultural forms from experiential museums like this one to the hugely attended D-Day reenactments of 1994. The popularity of these media events signal a widespread desire to experience history in a personal, bodily way. They offer one way of making history into personal memory and thus advance the production of prosthetic memories. One might say that they provide individuals with a public opportunity to have an experiential relationship to a collective or cultural past.\textsuperscript{89}

This experiential visiting experience resonates in a way with the visitor that furthers their education more so than in a traditional temple setting. This type of experiential experience is a form of active learning that engages the visitor more thoroughly with the exhibits than the older, traditional forms of didactic learning, which merely gives visitors the information it wants them to know without engaging them in any way. The museum’s ability to further involve its visitors with the history of the Holocaust through its experiential form is a far greater and highly valued asset despite the criticisms by some that the museum is too intense and graphic in its display.

Because the USHMM was built from the ground up, the building’s design became a tool to reinforce the mood of the museum and dictate the way visitors move through the museum. Architect James Ingo Freed used steel, brick, and glass to create a sense of space that is removed from Washington, D.C.\textsuperscript{90} Many of the details of the museum are reminiscent of concentration camps. According to Freed, “Brick walls, exposed beams, boarded windows and metal fences and gates will let visitors know they are in a different place—that the Holocaust is an event that should disturb and be felt as well as perceived.”\textsuperscript{91} Freed’s design was inspired after having visited the remnants of the concentration camps in Europe. The physical space of the USHMM is part of the exhibits instead of being just a shell to hold them, as is the case for many museums.

\textsuperscript{89} Landsberg, “America, the Holocaust, and the Mass Culture of Memory,” 74.
\textsuperscript{90} Linenthal, \textit{Preserving Memory}, 88-89.
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid, 91.
The permanent exhibition at the USHMM, *The Holocaust*, spans the top three floors of the museum. It begins on the top, on the fourth floor, with images of the American liberation of Nazi concentration camps and the shocking discovery of the conditions of the prisoners there. The theme of the fourth floor is “Nazi Assault—1933-1939.” The exhibits and artifacts on this floor highlight the Nazis rise to power in Germany and their systematic persecution of Jews. The third floor is “The ‘Final Solution—1940-1945.’” The exhibits on this floor document Nazi policies as they evolved from persecution to the mass murder of Jews. Camp life is emphasized in many exhibits and on this floor, at the halfway point of the exhibition, visitors are met with a restored rail car of the same type used to transport the Nazis’ victims to the various concentration and death camps throughout Europe. Visitors are required to physically pass through the railcar in order to continue to the rest of the exhibit. This is once again an example of the USHMM forcing the visitors’ path through the museum. Visitors have no choice but to come face to face with the interior of the railcar to give them a better idea of the size and scope of the car from the point of view of the Nazis’ victims. The third floor also contains artifacts and displays on life in ghettos, the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, and Anne Frank. The second floor contains the last segment of the permanent exhibition, “Last Chapter.” This part of the exhibition features accounts of rescue and resistance and the aftermath of the Holocaust, including a video of survivor testimonies.
The permanent exhibition also contains an element that connects all of these sections. A tower of photographs of people and families from the Ejszyszki shtetl in Lithuania extends from the third floor up to the fourth floor and beyond to the upper tower space. These photographs represent a Jewish community that was exterminated by the Einsatzgruppen in 1941, and of the thousands of people represented in the photographs of this former Jewish community, approximately ninety percent were murdered.\(^2\)

Figure 1.2: Tower of Faces: This three-story tower displays photographs from the Yaffa Eliach Shtetl Collection. Taken between 1890 and 1941 in Eishishok, a small town in what is now Lithuania, they describe a vibrant Jewish community that existed for 900 years. In 1941, an SS mobile killing squad entered the village and within two days massacred the Jewish population. Credit: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The permanent exhibition at the USHMM takes visitors through the journey of the victims of the Holocaust from the beginning of Nazi rule in Germany through the war years and the conditions of ghettos and concentration camps and finally to the end with accounts of rescues

\(^2\) Ibid, 176-182. Linenthal devotes several pages in *Preserving Memory* to the full story of Yaffa Eliach and her work to collect the photographs and her fight to display them as an organic piece of collective memory that is displayed in the tower space.
and resistance along with the camp liberations and into the present with video testimony from survivors and liberators. The first floor of the museum is used for travelling and special exhibits that include various topics of focus within the context of the Holocaust. The USHMM also boasts a library and archive that is available to researchers and those interested in learning more about the Holocaust. The first floor is also where the USHMM holds teacher training workshops to assist educators to the various methods of teaching the Holocaust in a classroom setting. The museum also hosts a number of public programs such as lectures and book talks on various topics on the Holocaust. Since the advent of the World Wide Web, the USHMM has extended its public presence by hosting various online exhibitions as well as a Holocaust Encyclopedia, which has been translated into over ten different languages. The USHMM receives visitors from all around the world both in Washington, D.C. and on their website.

Judged against its mission, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has proven to be a valuable asset to Holocaust education programs across the country. From its archives, library, and online research tools, to their workshops for instructors who teach the Holocaust and internships and volunteer programs, the national museum has had an enormous impact on increasing Holocaust education and awareness. In spite of all of the opposition and controversy that surrounded the establishment of the memorial museum, the site has become one of the most popular tourist stops in Washington, D.C. In the face of Holocaust deniers this museum stands to disprove their conspiracy theories. Not only that, but the USHMM teaches important lessons of the damage of ignorance, isolation, and inaction, which helps prevent the possibility of another such genocide from taking place again in the world.

The USHMM stands as the model for other Holocaust museums in the U.S. to follow. Many of the design elements of the exhibition space and display techniques of their artifacts have been mimicked in other museums, like the ones in Florida. Some of the common features that can be observed in the Florida museums that are reminiscent of the permanent exhibition at the USHMM include: a forced pathway through the exhibition, a Jewish focus of their permanent exhibitions, a tower of photographs like the one by Yaffa Eliach, and having a railcar for visitors to interact with. While the USHMM now provides museums with a template for content and design, the multiple Holocaust museums in Florida are designed in a way that resembles and diverges from this national presentation. Each represents their local community’s collective
memory of the Holocaust and, therefore, they are not carbon copies of either the USHMM or each other.
CHAPTER 2
FLORIDA HOLOCAUST MUSEUMS: A REFLECTION OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

In 2008, Florida had the third highest Jewish population in the United States with over 75% of that population concentrated in Southeast Florida (Palm Beach, Broward, and Miami-Dade Counties); a fact that has not changed much since the early 1990s. Similarly, Florida has the third highest population of Holocaust survivors, estimated to be at 27,000 in 2002. When the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in 1993, Florida had four institutions dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and the education of their communities. Two of these institutions were museums, one was a resource and education center, and the other a public memorial space. There are currently three Holocaust museums in Florida, located in Maitland, St. Petersburg, and Naples; and one in development in Hollywood.

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida in Maitland was established in 1981 and is currently located on the 13 acre Jewish Community Center complex in a 22,000 square foot building. In 1992 the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Education Center opened in a small 4,000 square foot complex, but moved in 1998 to a larger three-story, 27,000 square foot building in downtown St. Petersburg where it is currently and is now known as the Florida Holocaust Museum. Because the FHM moved into a new facility in 1998, several years after the USHMM’s opening in Washington D.C. in 1993, it fits the argument that the FHM follows the USHMM’s template influence since, as it stands today, the FHM was designed after the USHMM opened. The Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida opened at its current location in the almost 3,000 square foot space at Sandalwood Square in Naples in 2002. The forthcoming South Florida Holocaust Museum located in downtown Hollywood will be located in a yet-to-be-built three story building that can range anywhere from 30,000 to 50,000 square feet. This future site sits next door to the current building that the

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organization occupies which is a three-story 15,000 square foot Art Deco building that will house future traveling exhibitions along with their administrative offices.

These institutions, while remarkably similar in their thematic and chronological display of the Holocaust in their permanent exhibitions, have striking differences in the type of artifacts displayed and the manner in which they are presented. Each museum has different artifacts used in its exhibit that are not found on display in the other museums, these artifacts come from local survivors and witnesses and family members of victims. The type of media used in each museum is also different, and again, also contains items that are specific to the community such as local survivor and witness testimony. The permanent exhibitions cover different topics in each museum and of the three that have train cars in their collections, each uses it differently in regards to how visitors interact with it. These differences are a direct reflection of the local community that each museum represents and the people who founded each institution. Despite the similarities in framework and thematic display of the Holocaust in the USHMM and these Florida museums, there is an important difference that is seen in the very beginning of their exhibits. The USHMM’s exhibit begins with the American liberation of the camps, emphasizing its underlying theme of the United States’ role in the Holocaust, while the local museums in Florida begin with displays on Jewish life prior to World War II, which emphasizes their focus on Jewish Americans. This variation in the beginning of the exhibits is indicative of the difference in community and audience of the local and national museums. While the overall substance of these museums is the same, there remains an obvious contrast in their content due to the nature of the collections themselves. The Florida museums are representative of the local Jewish communities and, through their collections, create a connection to the local community that is not seen in the national museum.

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida: The Beginning

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida was founded officially in 1981 after a three day conference on the Holocaust and genocide put on by Valencia Community College and the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando. Originally housed on the downtown campus of Valencia Community College in Orlando, the center moved to the Jewish Community Center in Maitland in 1982 while waiting for construction to finish on their future

95 Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida, “History,” unpublished.
permanent building. The Center then moved into their permanent home in the summer of 1986 in the newly constructed Holocaust Memorial Building which is located next to the main building of the Jewish Community Center. The Center contains a permanent exhibit and extensive research library on the Holocaust and a space for temporary exhibitions on related subjects. According to their mission statement published on their website, “The mission of the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida is to use the history and lessons of the Holocaust in order to build a more just and caring community free of anti-Semitism and all forms of racism and bigotry.” Although the Center does not call itself a museum by name it is still considered a museum because it has a permanent collection of artifacts and a permanent exhibition in which it displays and interprets its collection to the public.

The Permanent Exhibition

The permanent exhibition at the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida provides a chronological sequence of the events of the Holocaust. However, the center also sets up the visitor’s experience in unique way. The museum confronts audiences with evidence of anti-Semitism in the present. Before the main exhibition begins, there are a few wall panels that display contemporary life, such as threats from neo-Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan, and the life of Jewish communities before World War II with their assaults by anti-Semites and pogroms. This display serves as an introduction to the main exhibit.

What marks the uniqueness of this exhibit is the document that is displayed under the Contemporary Life section. This document contains two type-written pages from the Florida State Director of the Ku Klux Klan written on June 21, 1987. This document contains a cover letter addressed to the Center directly regarding a “Letter to the Editor” that he had written to the Orlando Sentinel. The cover letter states: “I thought you might be interested in learning a few facts about the “Holocaust”, but then I guess you already know them. It’s too bad that the memorial does not teach the true facts.” The following “Letter to the Editor” expresses typical Holocaust denial statements such as the use of the earliest low figures of murders by the Nazis and claims that International Zionism has brainwashed the American people, especially those in

96 Ibid.
the government. This document serves as a reminder of the hatred and bigotry that still exists in today’s world, including in the local community. Such a document that directly targets this institution helps illustrate the need for it in the community.

The permanent exhibition is made up predominately of wall panels with archival images and lots of text with a small sampling of artifacts and a few multimedia displays interspersed throughout. The exhibition begins with Jewish life before WWII and the history of anti-Semitism in Europe. The exhibit then continues on to document Hitler’s rise to power and increases in Nazi propaganda and Jewish persecution followed by isolation in ghettos and camps. The next display is on Camp Life and contains the majority of the few artifacts that are on display in this small museum. After the section on Camp Life comes the display about Resistance, and includes examples of spiritual resistance such as art. The exhibit then moves on to the Final Solution, the death marches in The Last Journey, and finally Liberation by the Allied Forces completes the timeline of the exhibit. At the very end of the exhibit is a multimedia display that shares the stories of local survivors and liberators, entitled “Witness History.”

The exhibition space here is different than the other museums in that the entire exhibition, with the small exception of those first few introductory panels, is contained in one fairly large room with each section of the exhibit being contained in a recessed portion of the wall and moves along the perimeter of the room from the back left, around to the front and then down along the right wall where it ends across from where it started. The room is filled with several chairs in the middle presumably for lectures that are held there and for school groups when they visit. These chairs face the front wall of the museum which is also known as the Memorial Wall which is built with Jerusalem Stone and has a center glass panel that holds an art installation that can also be viewed from the outside. This installation contains six memorial lights that symbolize the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust.100

Educational Programming

The Center’s most prominent feature is not their museum however, it is their library. The Center’s library has a collection of over 5,000 volumes and over 500 videotapes. The majority of the books are on the Holocaust but also related subjects such as Anti-Semitism, Jewish-Christian relations, Jewish history, and others. There is also a section for younger patrons and reference shelves that contain Holocaust encyclopedias and documentary material from Yad Vashem along with other items, including rare books. The library also houses the Center’s oral history collection, which is included in the video collection, while the archival collection contains Yiskor (memorial) books and other items donated to the Center. The library’s materials are available for check out at no cost to any interested researchers and their catalogue can also be searched online, although their collection is always growing as new books come out.

Like other Holocaust museums, the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida also hosts a week long summer teacher training workshop for local educators, as well as evening teachers’ programs every quarter. The Center offers free teaching trunks to local public and private schools at every level from elementary through high school. The trunks

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102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
contain various text, photo, and audio-visual components to help assist in classroom lessons.\textsuperscript{104} The Center also offers survivor presentations in the museum or at the schools and also holds a creative arts contest for Central Florida students.

\textbf{A Brief History of the Florida Holocaust Museum}

The Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg, Florida was originally opened in 1992 under the name of the Tampa Bay Holocaust Memorial Museum and Education Center, located at the Jewish Community Center of Pinellas County in Madeira Beach, Florida. In 1989, Walter P. Loebenberg, a local businessman and philanthropist who escaped Nazi Germany in 1939 and joined the United States Army during World War II, first came up with the idea to establish a Holocaust museum in the Tampa Bay area after seeing the Dallas Holocaust Museum on a videotape.\textsuperscript{105} Loebenberg then worked tirelessly to acquire the museum’s first artifact, an authentic Holocaust-era railcar from Poland, which arrived in Tampa in January of 1990.\textsuperscript{106} Together with a group of local businessmen and community leaders, his idea for a “living memorial” became a reality.\textsuperscript{107} The museum opened in 1992 and operated as a museum with one small exhibition and as a resource center with one staff member and “a small group of dedicated volunteers.”\textsuperscript{108}

The museum grew over the next five years, hosting lectures, seminars, and commemorative events, as well as international exhibits.\textsuperscript{109} As the museum expanded in its number of artifacts, audio-visual and print material, and in visitorship, the Board of Directors approved plans for the purchase and renovation of a new site for the museum in downtown St. Petersburg. This plan was approved in 1996 and on February 28, 1998, the museum opened at its new location which offered 27,000 square feet of space as opposed to the 4,000 square feet of space in its previous location at the Jewish Community Center in Madeira Beach. In January 1999, the museum officially changed its name to the Florida Holocaust Museum to better suit “the criteria established in the mission statement of the Museum, reflected the utilization of the

\textsuperscript{104} Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center, “The Holocaust Memorial Center Teaching Trunks: A Success Story,” http://www.holocaustedu.org/education/Trunks_Overview.htm.
\textsuperscript{106} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{108} Moore, 2X.
\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
Museum as a statewide and national resource, and created greater awareness and impact beyond the Tampa Bay area.” The museum is the largest of its kind in the Southeastern United States, and in 2003 the Florida Holocaust Museum received accreditation from the American Association of Museums.

**The Educational Mission of the Florida Holocaust Museum**

The mission of the Florida Holocaust Museum as stated in its most recent publication declares:

The Florida Holocaust Museum honors the memory of millions of innocent men, women, and children who suffered or died in the Holocaust. The Museum is dedicated to teaching members of all races and cultures to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of human life in order to prevent future genocides. The central focus of the Museum’s mission is to educate others, especially future generations, about the Holocaust, other genocides and human rights abuses that have occurred throughout history. The Museum accomplishes this through many established educational programs as well as new techniques that include art, artifacts, testimony and literature.

The museum’s mission statement reflects the USHMM’s influence of generating greater focus on genocide beyond the events of the Holocaust. Their mission also illustrates the more recent trend in the late 20th century of American museums to become more of an educational center then a depository of artifacts.

The museum’s education department conducts several programs that assist in the education of students in the surrounding counties’ school districts. The services and programs run by the museum include: author and survivor lecture series, community outreach, traveling exhibits, docent-led tours, teaching trunks, student awareness days, summer institutes, teacher trainings, temporary exhibits, docent training, museum library, educational outreach. According to museum figures, “approximately 15,000 students visit the museum annually in school group tours and other student focused programs.” The museum’s summer teaching institute is a week long program that trains K-12 teachers to better teach the Holocaust in the classroom. According to the museum’s website, the museum works collaboratively with the Pinellas County School system to develop guidelines for K-12 teachers which include: “grade-appropriate

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instructional goals and bibliography for teaching the Holocaust.”114 According to the museum’s figures, “more than 300 teachers benefit from the Museum’s teacher training programs every year.”115

The Florida Holocaust Museum is contracted by the Florida Department of Education as an official service provider for Holocaust and character education and disseminates curriculum to Florida’s public schools. Character education is what the Florida Department of Education considers to be the foundation for later Holocaust education and is taught in grades K-3. Character education teaches younger students the values of tolerance, kindness, respect and the understanding that the world around them is filled with diversity.116 The museum also runs several education programs in house as well as outreach programs to area schools. The museum’s educational programs include: guided tours (led by trained docents), teaching trunks, summer teacher training institutes, Student Awareness Days, lecture series by leading Holocaust scholars and survivors, traveling exhibits, and a research library. The teaching trunks provide grade-appropriate instructional materials for teachers to use in their classrooms to facilitate the learning of the different grade-appropriate themes and lessons of the Holocaust. More than 50,000 students are directly impacted by the implementation of these teaching trunks every year according to museum figures.117

A Content Analysis of the Permanent Exhibition at the FHM

The layout and organization of the Florida Holocaust Museum’s permanent exhibition, “History, Heritage and Hope,” is similar in content and design as the permanent exhibition at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum which was established several years earlier. The permanent exhibition at the FHM spans the entire first floor of the building and offers both docent led tours and self-guided audio tours. The first defining similarity between these two exhibitions is the forced pathway the visitor must take through the exhibition. It starts and ends in a specific place and it is impossible for the visitor to bypass or cut through to a certain part of the exhibition without traversing the whole thing. The exhibition is also organized along similar

117 Ibid.
themes as the USHMM. It begins with a brief history of Jewish life and culture before WWII and also includes the history of anti-Semitism in Europe through the ages. The exhibition then moves on to cover the rise of Adolf Hitler and Nazi power in Germany and the beginning of Jewish persecution. As the visitor moves through the exhibition hall the exhibits move on to cover the Final Solution, ghettoization and deportations to camps. There are exhibits on the Warsaw ghetto, a diorama of the Auschwitz concentration camp, and a small display on the S.S. *St. Louis*. The exhibition culminates with the end of the war, camp liberations, and a few wall panels on the Civil Rights movement in America and other genocides in the world, such as the Armenian genocide.

Also, similarly to the USHMM, there is a small room at the end of the exhibit hall that plays video of survivor testimonies and the museum’s train car is centrally located in the museum’s building, but cannot be viewed until visitor reaches the end of the exhibit. The train car is in a sectioned off room that also contains another strong similarity to the USHMM. Unlike the USHMM however, visitors are not permitted to walk on the train car, but it is a main feature of the permanent exhibition. On the eastern wall of this space, at one end of the train car is a wall covered in photographs of Jewish families, documenting their life before World War II, much like the display of photographs at the USHMM of the Ejszyszki shtetl in Lithuania which spans three floors and shows what Jewish life was like at that shtetl before the Nazis came. These photographs at the FHM cover the entire height of the wall on the first and second floors of the building and also contain twelve monitors that digitally display photographs on a rotating basis.
From the Classroom to the Museum: The Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida

Of the five Holocaust sites in Florida, the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida, located in the city of Naples, is the youngest institution of the four in Florida and has a completely different beginning than the others. The museum grew from a classroom project in 1998 at Golden Gate Middle School in Naples. Dave Bell, a social studies teacher who taught both seventh and eighth grade students at Golden Gate came up with the idea after many of his students demonstrated their lack of knowledge of the events during 1933 and 1945. In an effort to teach students about the Holocaust in a more tangible way, Bell approached the Collier County Education Foundation for a grant to fund a project on the Holocaust and received approximately $1,300 from the Jewish Federation of Collier County. While the students were reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* in their Language Arts class, Bell organized this museum exhibit project for them to work on in his social studies class. Bell stated in the *Naples Daily News*, “I thought it would be neat if we could create a museum to go along with it. So I applied for a grant from the Collier County Education Foundation. These kids were reading 'Anne Frank' and they had no background. The kids were really interested and it merited more than a week.”

Bell’s students spent months researching in books and on the internet and reaching out to people across the country for materials for their exhibit. As the *Naples Daily News* reported, the response was overwhelming:

Director Steven Spielberg sent a copy of the production notes for “Schindler's List.” TV talk show host Larry King sent materials from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington. Renowned photographer Arnold Newman sent two photographs -- one of which is a portrait of Otto Frank, whose diarist daughter Anne came to represent the irrepressibility of youth and humankind during the Holocaust. Local people, too, donated to the museum: yellow stars of David the Nazis forced Jews to wear; money specifically printed for Jews under Nazi rule; label from a can of the Zyklon B gas used to exterminate Jews; and a bar of soap made of human remains and tagged with an evidence slip from the trials at Nuremberg. But most haunting are the photographs -- some donated, some from Life magazine, some enlarged from books -- of the victims and survivors.

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119 Ibid.
121 Kircher, “Haunting History Lesson,” B01.
The motto of this early exhibition was, “Tell your children of it and let your children tell their children and their children and another generation.” Bell’s goal for this project was not only for the students to learn about the Holocaust, but to remember it as well.

The exhibition was put on display in a vacant classroom in the school, but it could not be kept their long term despite its use as part of the fulfillment of the state’s mandated Holocaust education. The exhibit had to be repeatedly taken down and set up again when it was needed and in between uses was stored in various places throughout Naples. On November 24, 2000, the museum opened its doors at Tanglewood Shopping Center on N. Tamiami Trail in Naples. The museum operated there for two years before moving to a larger location just a few blocks south, to the Sandalwood Square plaza in 2002, where it is currently located.

The Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida: A Museum for the Community

The Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida is artifact heavy with over four hundred artifact from World War II and the Holocaust, the majority of which have been donated or permanently loaned to the museum from local community members including survivors and liberators. The museum offers self-guided audio tours and docent-led tours, but like other museums, the path through the museum is somewhat fixed in a specific order with one entrance and one exit. This pathway is not as pronounced as it is at the USHMM or even the FHM, but it is implied that the visitor is to begin at the designated beginning of the exhibit and to follow the path in order, an order that is very similar to the one established at the USHMM. The exhibit begins with a brief history of Jewish persecution and pre-1933 photographs of Jewish families from local survivors. Again, this idea of pre-war memory of Jewish lives is reminiscent of Yaffa Eliach’s photographs of the families of the Ejszyszki shtetl in Lithuania at the USHMM.

The exhibit then proceeds to cover the rise of Nazi power and propaganda which is immediately followed by a display on Kristallnacht. The invasions of Poland and the USSR are then covered including sections on Polish ghettos, Theresienstadt, Babi Yar, and Kattyn. The permanent exhibit then moves on to the Final Solution and the Wannsee Conference followed by

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122 McClelland, “Holocaust Museum Serves Collier Schools,” G01.
123 Kircher, “Haunting History Lesson,” B01.
124 McClelland, “Holocaust Museum Serves Collier Schools,” G01.
sections on Deportations and Concentration and Death Camps. There is a section on medical experiments and then the exhibition moves on to Resistance and Rescue which covers various uprisings, and people who assisted in open resistance or in saving Jews. As the exhibition comes to an end the displays contain sections on the Nuremburg Trials, Anne Frank, art from the Holocaust including children’s art from Theresienstadt, and finally personal photographs and documents from local survivors.

Figure 2.3: View of the Permanent Exhibition, looking out towards the exit. Photo courtesy of the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida

Although the HMSWFL follows the same layout as the other Holocaust museums, it contains more details and specific information about the major themes and events of the Holocaust in the exhibit than the others, including more artifacts. The permanent exhibition of the HMSWFL contains a section about the many international companies that had affiliations with concentration camps, meaning they benefitted from the slave labor in the camps. The exhibit also contains the replica of camp sleeping barracks which was built by David Bell and used in the original classroom exhibit. There is a bar of soap allegedly made from the remains of Jewish victims that still has the tag attached to it from its use as evidence in the Nuremburg
Trials. There’s a large room just off of the main exhibition space that is divided into two separate exhibit spaces. One half of the space contains the Armband Exhibit which contains hundreds of examples of the different patches and armbands that the Nazi’s forced people to wear on their clothing. This exhibit notes though that due to the large number of counterfeits that were made post-WWII, their authenticity cannot be vouched for all the items. The other half of the space contains Wartime Photographs from Ken Regele. Ken Regele was an official photographer for the U.S. Army whose images had been featured in LIFE magazine. Mr. Regele donated two canisters of undeveloped film that were taken during WWII. One canister was empty, however the other contained dozens of photographs. These photographs capture events from June 7, 1944, to April 26, 1945, and are unique to this museum. This space also contains a brief exhibit on the Shanghai Ghetto, something that is not mentioned in any of Florida’s Holocaust museums.

The Boxcar: The Cornerstone of the Education Program

The HMSCWFL also owns a 1917 railroad boxcar, one of only seven in the country, which was purchased in 2006 by then museum president, Jack Nortman. The boxcar, which has been identified by experts as the same type that was used to transport people to concentration camps, underwent a restoration that repaired the boxcar to its WWII era design and also protected the boxcar from the environmental elements it is exposed to in South Florida. The boxcar is a major part of the educational program at the museum. The museum’s education program brings the boxcar to middle schools, high schools, and universities in Southwest Florida to give students a firsthand account of Nazi cruelty. According to Kathy Francis, associate head of The Community School of Naples, “It [the boxcar] is something visual that is going to allow our

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131 Ibid, this article goes into greater detail of the process of finding, purchasing, transporting, and restoring the boxcar in Naples.
students to understand the scope of how horrible this was. It is important to our history to ensure that this never happens again.”

The boxcar serves as the museum’s traveling exhibit and allows students to actually climb aboard the boxcar and walk around in its interior to have a better understanding of what it was like for the hundred plus people who were forced to travel in a single boxcar like this one to the various concentration camps. It is an intense experience for most people who have ever been inside a boxcar at a Holocaust museum, regardless of any personal connections they have to the events of the Holocaust, and this experience is not lost on students. Caitlin Lavery, a high school freshman at The Community School of Naples said, “It is scary being in there. I can’t imagine what it was like to be in there with 100 other people.” Artifacts such as WWII era boxcars serve as strong and powerful evidence of the Holocaust that tend to serve as the focal point for many Holocaust museums. They are an artifact that can stand on their own as evidence to Holocaust deniers without requiring any interpretation from the museum.

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133 Ibid.
134 Ibid.
Educational Programs at the HMSWFL

The boxcar traveling exhibit is just one of several education programs offered by the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida. The museum also offers two other traveling exhibits: “The Holocaust: History and Memory” and “Genocide through the Eyes of a Child.” These two exhibits contain several wall panels that teach through archival images, personal testimony, and museum artifacts the history of the Holocaust and in the case of the “Genocide through the Eyes of a Child” exhibit, the genocides in the Holocaust, Bosnia, Rwanda, and Darfur from a child’s perspective. These two exhibits can be rented from the museum for a week at a time at a nominal fee. The museum also offers a power point presentation designed for grades 4-6 and a story telling program for grades 1-3.

The museum also offers teacher training programs in the summer. For one week in June, the museum collaborates with Florida Gulf Coast University to put on a teacher training seminar that is free to teachers in Charlotte, Collier, Glades, Hendry, and Lee counties. The seminar brings in scholars, educators, and Holocaust survivors to speak to the teachers and help them develop their own Holocaust curriculum for their classes. With the passage of the educational mandate to teach the Holocaust in public schools in Florida, these teacher training programs provide a vital source of information about the Holocaust to local educators and help them create more effective lessons for their students.

The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center: A History

Although the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center (HDEC) is the oldest of all the Holocaust institutions in Florida, it did not begin as a museum; the museum is in fact still in the planning stage and will not be open for a few years which is why it is discussed last. The HDEC was founded in 1980 under the name of the Southeast Florida Holocaust Memorial Center and located at, although not directly affiliated with, the North Miami Branch of Florida International University (FIU). The Center was the vision of Arnold Picker and Abe Halpern who wanted it to be “A Living Memorial through Education.” The HDEC has always had a

137 Ibid.
commitment to collecting eyewitness testimony since its inception and is dedicated to its educational mission as stated on their website:

The Center's primary mission is to preserve, protect, and perpetuate the authentic memory of the Holocaust by creating a permanent and irrefutable record of the testimonies of Survivors, Liberators, and Rescuers. These eyewitness accounts continue to forge, enrich, and enhance the process of Holocaust education in creating A LIVING MEMORIAL THROUGH EDUCATION as we endow the first South Florida Holocaust Museum.\(^{140}\)

The Center’s strong educational mission can be attributed to its founding and successive leaders who were either currently, or formerly, presidents of colleges in the South Florida area.\(^{141}\) The Center’s commitment to collecting and preserving the oral testimonies from anyone who was an eyewitness to the events of the Holocaust in Europe, have to date, collected more than 2,200 interviews which are housed in their Oral History Library Collection.\(^{142}\)

In 2001, the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center had to relocate after the building sustained damage from heavy rains that fell the year before.\(^{143}\) At the same time that the HDEC was looking for a new location, the issue of the Center’s autonomy came up for debate. Despite the HDEC’s location at Florida International University’s North Miami campus, the center remained an autonomous institution, selecting their own board of directors and managing their own budgets and programs.\(^{144}\) However, when the center had to look for a new building following the damage to their current facilities, the university’s administration informed them that if they wished to continue to be located on the FIU campus, and use FIU’s name, they would have to allow the university a say in some of their operations.\(^{145}\) The Center did not want to lose their autonomy nor did they want to have the university interfere with the way that the Center operated, so they packed up and moved into a temporary site. While looking for a new location, the center operated from a small office in North Miami Beach until they found an


\(^{143}\) Karla Schuster, “Holocaust Center at FIU is Seeking New Quarters - Rain Damage Forcing Move,” Sun-Sentinel, 17 May 2001, 10B.

\(^{144}\) Holly Stepp, “Holocaust Center, FIU Parting Ways,” The Miami Herald, 13 June 2001, 10B.

\(^{145}\) Ibid.
adequate place. In 2004 the Center found an acceptable location in downtown Hollywood that would also allow for the development of a museum on the site.\footnote{Jerry Berrios, “Holocaust Center Moving In,” \textit{The Miami Herald}, 21 January 2004, 1B.}

The new, and current, location of the HDEC was purchased from the Hollywood Community Redevelopment Agency for $1.2 million dollars for the building itself, and another $500 thousand dollars to renovate the building which was a former night club known as Deco Drive.\footnote{Ibid.} The museum, which is still currently in the planning phases, will be housed on the first and second floors of the building, with classrooms and administrative offices on the third floor.\footnote{Ibid.} In February of 2007, the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center acquired an authentic railcar from Poland which was used to transport Jews to concentration and death camps.\footnote{Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, “Holocaust Rail Car,” http://www.hdec.org/rail_car.htm.} In September 2008, the HDEC moved forward with expansion plans with the purchase of a nearby warehouse and parking lot to further accommodate the center’s plans for the museum.\footnote{Staff Report, “Holocaust Center Plans Move Forward,” \textit{Sun-Sentinel}, 5 September 2008, 5B.} The new location is still undergoing extensive renovation and does not yet have an opening date for the museum, however the center continues to carry out the educational programs and collect the oral testimonies of eyewitnesses that live in the South Florida area. When the museum opens it will contain exhibits in both English and Spanish, making it the first bilingual Holocaust museum in the North America.\footnote{Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, “About Us,” http://www.hdec.org/about_us.htm.}

**Designing the South Florida Holocaust Museum: A Vision 29 Years in the Making**

In February of 2010, the HDEC released the renderings for the South Florida Holocaust Museum prepared by the design firm Gallagher & Associates. The two three story building museum will consist of the renovated current building that the HDEC occupies and the neighboring property that will be modified and expanded to include the new state of the art exhibits that will make up the new South Florida Holocaust Museum. The proposed museum documents the events of the Holocaust chronologically like other Holocaust museums, however the SFHM will highlight events that are particularly relevant to South Floridians, such as the \textit{S.S. St. Louis}. The story of the \textit{S.S. St. Louis} is particularly poignant for the South Florida community as the ship sat within sight of the South Florida coastline as it tried to obtain
permission to land. They were denied and forced to return to Europe. Very few of the *St. Louis*’ passengers survived the Holocaust. The museum will also feature local survivor testimony which will be taken from the HDEC’s own vast oral history collection. According to the renderings, the permanent exhibition will begin on the third floor, focusing on life before the Holocaust and then progressing from there down to the second floor and then the ground floor. This layout is very similar to that of the USHMM which also has the visitors starting at the top floor, and then working their way down through the other floors to finish the exhibition. The renderings also show walls and columns covered in photographs of Jewish children for their exhibit honoring the one and one-half million children who died in the Holocaust. This exhibit is comparable to the photographs of families from the Ejszyszki shtetl in Lithuania displayed at the USHMM. 

In February of 2007 the HDEC acquired a Holocaust-era railcar from Poland that is currently kept in storage, but will be a highlight of the future South Florida Holocaust Museum. In the same manner as the boxcar in the USHMM, the boxcar at the South Florida

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Holocaust Museum will allow visitors to walk into the car and gain a sense of what it was like for the men, women, and children who were transported in them to the camps.

![Figure 2.7: Rendering: Reflection, Remembrance, and Responsibility. The boxcar can be seen in the background of the image with people walking through and viewing the interior. Credit: Gallagher & Associates. Image courtesy of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center.](image)

As of January 2010 projections, the museum will cost just over $21 million dollars, of which approximately $16 million dollars still needs to be raised.\(^{154}\) The museum will incorporate different types of multi-media in their exhibits along with traditional exhibit techniques such as wall panels, displays of photographs, artifacts, and dioramas. Not only is this museum a product of its time, with the inclusion of the latest interactive multi-media installations, but it is also a product of its community. The museum’s English and Spanish labels make sense because of the large Hispanic population in South Florida. Also, the museum’s extra focus on the *S.S. St. Louis* and inclusion of local survivors’ testimonies from their own oral history collection throughout the exhibition allows the museum to have a more personal feel that makes the museum more pertinent to the local South Florida community.

**The HDEC: “A Living Memorial through Education”**

The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center has a long history of educational outreach programs in the South Florida area. These programs include Student Awareness Days,

\(^{154}\) Ibid.
annual writing and visual arts contests, Speakers’ Bureau, student Act of Kindness contest, Teachers’ Institute, and the resource manuals for Holocaust education. The center’s educational programs have always been an important facet of the institution’s mission to increase Holocaust education in South Florida. Before the state mandate in 1994 that requires the Holocaust to be taught in schools, the HDEC had been distributing information and assisting educators in an effort to increase Holocaust education in local schools.

Student Awareness Days began in 1986 and are designed as a symposium for high school students to teach the, “dangers of racism, hatred, and bigotry through videos, lectures, and round-table discussions with Survivors of the Holocaust.” The students and teachers who attend these events are given a free CD that contains educational information and materials about the Holocaust. Students who participate in these programs feel like they learn more about the Holocaust than they do when they read about it in a textbook. A 10th grade student from Pahokee Middle Senior High School commented about the Student Awareness Days saying, “Today turned information into a reality and not just another history lesson.” A ninth grade Lake Worth High School student who participated in the program remarked, “I know that what I learned is going to make a great difference. For example, if anyone ever tells me that the Holocaust did not happen, I will tell him that it did and that I met a survivor who was there.” This statement in particular is a testament to the success of this program. As part of Holocaust institutions’ desire to combat Holocaust deniers, programs such as Student Awareness Days have proven effective in this regard especially.

Two important programs that are directly affected by the 1994 Holocaust Education Bill are the Teachers’ Institute and the resource manuals that the HDEC provide. The Teachers’ Institute is a week long program in the summer that provides first hand survivor accounts and grade appropriate educational techniques to K-12 teachers who are required to teach the Holocaust in their classrooms following the 1994 educational mandate. The resource manuals that are provided by the HDEC are the teaching manuals that the center wrote on behalf of the

156 Ibid.
158 Ibid.
state’s Task Force on Holocaust Education which are then distributed to schools throughout the state of Florida. There are four different manuals, broken down by grade levels: Grades K-3, 4-6, 7-8, and 9-12.

Conclusions

Although these Holocaust museums follow the same chronological path and covers the same themes for their permanent exhibitions, they are not identical. Each museum represents the community that it stands for and has something to offer that is unique to that particular institution. The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida is the only one of these four museums that was built before the USHMM opened and it shows as it is the one with the least similarities to the USHMM or even the other Holocaust museums in Florida. Despite the popularity of the USHMM and other local Holocaust museums in Florida, the Center has not changed its design which gives the museum its unique character that differentiates it from the other museums and shows that the museum was the first and not influenced by the national museum in Washington, D.C. The Florida Holocaust Museum, which appears to be the least personalized of the Florida Holocaust museums, does so due to its broader audience. The FHM stands as the preeminent Holocaust museum in the Southeast United States. It does not just represent St. Petersburg, or just Florida, but serves the entire Southeast region, and is therefore more similar to the USHMM, in that it serves a larger public than just the immediate local community. Although the FHM contains artifacts from members of the local community, the museum’s permanent exhibition displays only a small number of these artifacts. This fact makes the FHM’s exhibit more similar to that of the USHMM, as many of its artifacts that are displayed were acquired in Europe. In contrast, the permanent exhibition at the museum in Naples and the one proposed for the future museum in Hollywood both draw heavily from their permanent collections which is made up predominately of artifacts donated by members of the local community. Almost every artifact on display in the Naples museum was donated by a local resident and the future South Florida Holocaust Museum will have several exhibits in their permanent exhibition that will integrate local survivors’ testimonies from their vast oral history collection.

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161 Ibid.
Each of these institutions stand as a testament against hate, bigotry, and Holocaust deniers and share the same goal of educating the local students and general public to learn from the lessons of the Holocaust. Even though all of these museums tell the same story of the Holocaust and along the same themes, the visitor to each museum has a different experience based on that particular museum’s design and material that is on display. Each museum is a source of local public memory of the Holocaust that is relatable to the members of each community because of the personalized nature of each museum. Public memory is powerful and can sometimes differ from the museum curator’s goal for the exhibit. In this case however, because each institution was able to include artifacts from and representative of the local Jewish and Holocaust survivor community, these museums were able to create a powerful permanent exhibition that is well received by the community at large and a tool for further education for local schools.

Taken as a whole, the public memory that is displayed in these museums is more than just the actual events of the Holocaust. These museums present memory in a way that makes it more accessible to its visitors. It is about remembering the lives of the individual and honoring their memory. These are not just faceless people in a textbook or in an exhibit; they are men, women, and children who are not Europeans, but Floridians. They are neighbors, co-workers, friends, and family members who lived through the history that is being presented. Because survivors have played such a significant role in the creation of these institutions, there is a palpable redemptive quality to the exhibits that is different from the USHMM. In the local museums it is more about the lives of Jewish Americans and not, like in the USHMM, focused on the United States’ involvement, or lack thereof, in the war.
CHAPTER 3
THE HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL ON MIAMI BEACH

Holocaust remembrance is a relatively new phenomenon in terms of historical study. Historical sites, such as museums and memorials, devoted to Holocaust memory have risen dramatically since the 1980s. In Florida, this situation is no different. By the time the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened in 1993, Florida had four institutions dedicated to preserving the memory of the Holocaust and the education of their communities. Two of these sites were located in Southeast Florida, one in Central Florida, and the other in West Central Florida. One of the sites located in South Florida is a permanent memorial located in the heart of Miami Beach. This site, the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach, began as an idea among a small group of local Holocaust survivors, and in a matter of a few years, blossomed into the large memorial plaza that it is today. The memorial, which stands on a little over an acre of land in the heart of Miami Beach, did not go up without controversy. Issues surrounding the creation of the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach included land disputes, questions of aesthetics and religious affiliations, and arguments over the need of a site for Holocaust memory in the community. Despite the controversies and opposition the memorial faced in the beginning, it remains as an important institution of Holocaust memory and education for its thousands of visitors every year from across the state.

The Beginning

Tracing the history of the memorial begins twenty-five years ago in 1984 when Dr. Helen Fagin, historian and survivor of the Holocaust, assembled together a group of local survivors to create a memorial to the six million Jews whose lives were lost. The story of the formation of the memorial committee and the decision to create a memorial to the Jewish victims of the Holocaust can best be expressed in Dr. Fagin’s own words:

In the fall of 1984 I asked a small group of Miami’s Holocaust survivors to join me in developing the idea of building a permanent memorial to the memory of the six million Jews who perished from the hands of the Nazis. It seemed only fitting that a community with one of the largest Holocaust survivor populations in the world should follow the lead of Philadelphia, Atlanta, San Francisco and Detroit in erecting a Holocaust memorial that
would stand as a permanent reminder to future generations of Nazi persecution, as well as a symbol of the world’s indifference to genocide. The Holocaust Memorial Committee was formally established a year later as a private non-profit organization. Its objective was to organize a permanent committee, locate a potential site, develop ideas for the scope and design of the Memorial, and determine ways and means of financial support for the project.\footnote{162}

Five of the ten members of the Holocaust Memorial Committee were actual Holocaust survivors: Jack Chester, Helen Fagin, George Goldbloom, David Schaecter, and City Commissioner Abe Resnick.\footnote{163} The other members consisted of Ezra Katz, a son of survivors, Rabbi Solomon Schiff, Kenneth Treister, architect and sculptor of the memorial, Harry B. Smith, attorney for the committee, and Norman Braman, chairman and a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.\footnote{164} The committee was able, within a very short time frame, to privately raise $2 million dollars to build the memorial, pick a location for the site, and commission an artist to design it.

An early point of contention that memorial supporters had to defend was the decision to build a Holocaust memorial in Miami Beach rather than somewhere else. Many people in opposition did not understand why a memorial for the victims of the Holocaust belonged in Miami Beach. What these opponents may not have known at the time was that South Florida is home to the second largest survivor population in the country, behind the Northeast. According to a demographic study performed by Dr. Ira M. Sheshkin on behalf of the Greater Miami Jewish Federation in 1982, there were 253,000 Jews in Dade County making it the fourth largest Jewish community in the country.\footnote{165} South Florida, in general, was also found to have the second largest Jewish population; New York having the first largest.\footnote{166} Due to the high number of Jews, and Holocaust survivors specifically, the support for a Holocaust memorial was much greater than it would be in an area with a less significant Jewish community.

Why were there so many Jews in South Florida, and specifically in the Greater Miami area? In 1893 Jews began to settle in Southeast Florida thanks to Henry Flagler’s new railroad, making their own niches and communities throughout Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach

\footnote{162} Helen N. Fagin, “In Memory of Six Million Martyrs…,” in \textit{In Memory of the Six Million Jewish Victims of the Holocaust}, (Miami Beach: Holocaust Memorial Committee, n.p.).
\footnote{163} Herald Staff, “The Memorial’s Driving Force,” \textit{Miami Herald}, 7 April 1987, 3C.
\footnote{164} Ibid.
\footnote{166} Ibid.
Anti-Semitism increased sharply in Florida following World War I and as a result, in Miami Beach, restrictive land covenants prevented Jews from living north of Fifth Street and thereby relegated them to live in what came to be known as South Beach. There was open anti-Semitism throughout the city. Apartments and hotels posted signs in black letters proclaiming "Gentiles only" and advertisements for the city appealed to the "regular American of the approved type." In 1949 Gentile-only policies were officially outlawed. By 1950, the Jewish population in Florida was estimated at 70,000 and another 10,000 Cuban Jews came to the South Florida region in 1959 following Fidel Castro’s rise to power in Cuba. The Jewish community in Miami Beach continued to grow and expand as Jewish retirees from the Northeast moved south to enjoy the warmer climate and close-knit communities that established themselves post-World War II.

Miami Beach was chosen specifically for the memorial because it is where the committee originally formed and because it had a large established Jewish community. Due to the large Jewish presence in the city, and the South Beach neighborhood in particular, a physical site for the future memorial was chosen; a site that had previously been promised to another organization. The Holocaust Memorial Committee soon found itself in a bitter land dispute with the women of The Garden Center (now known as the Miami Beach Botanical Garden). The site is located on the corner of Meridian Avenue and Dade Boulevard, next to the Convention Center and across the street from the Miami Beach Chamber of Commerce, and a few blocks north of the Lincoln Road Mall.

The Battle for the Land: The Garden Center vs. Commissioner Abe Resnick

In 1959 Miami Beach’s four main garden clubs came together to petition the city for a botanical garden and meeting place. The women approached the city officials for “not just a garden center, but an outstanding tourist attraction,” according to founding chairwoman Evelyn

167 Rachel B. Heimovics and Marcia Zerivitz, Florida Jewish Heritage Trail, (Tallahassee: Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, 2000), 2 & 28.
168 Ibid, 2.
170 Ibid.
171 Heimovics and Zerivitz, Florida Jewish Heritage Trail, 28.
172 Dade Boulevard was additionally named Abe Resnick Boulevard on May 14, 1999, in honor of the late commissioner and Holocaust survivor who played a major role in the development of the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach. Herald Staff, “Naming Honor,” Miami Herald, 30 May 1999, 21BC.
The garden clubs’ $150,000 proposal was approved and The Garden Center was dedicated in 1962. In the early 1970s The Garden Center fell victim to budget cuts; however, in 1979 a $250,000 bond issue passed to expand the center, make improvements to the greenhouse, and add a Japanese garden, patio, and a network of gardens and ponds including waterfalls and bridges. Unfortunately, the work was slow, and a house on the west end of the property took several years before it could be cleared off the land in order to properly begin the expansion.

At the same time that The Garden Center was ready to officially begin work on their expansion, Memorial Committee member, Abe Resnick, approached the city with plans for a Holocaust memorial to be built on the same site.

One of the memorial’s biggest driving forces was Abe Resnick: local developer, city commissioner, and Holocaust survivor. Abe Resnick was from Lithuania and lost both his parents and his two sisters in 1941 when the Germans invaded his home town of Rokiskis. After immigrating to Cuba to join his only remaining family (who had immigrated to Cuba before the war broke out) in 1947, Resnick built himself up as a successful developer. When Fidel Castro came to power in 1959, he immigrated to Miami Beach where he eventually began to develop apartment buildings which he later sold as condominiums. Resnick became a big time real estate developer in Miami Beach whose many condominiums can be seen throughout the South Beach area. Although he is well-known for his opposition to the historic preservation effort in the Art Deco District of the city, Abe Resnick became a formidable player in support of the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach. Resnick and the other Memorial Committee members chose the Garden Center’s site because it would place the memorial next to a beautiful garden and make it accessible. According to Resnick, “There are 20-25,000 survivors in this region. We felt this is the right place to put up a monument to represent all of Florida. We analyzed some other sites; but why should we settle for something secondary?”

The women of the Garden Center were not opposed to the memorial itself, simply the fact that it was encroaching on their promised land. “‘They were supposed to put in a fountain there,’ said Trina Drapkin, of the garden center. ‘I’d rather have a fountain that people can come and

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174 Ibid.
176 Stofik, Saving South Beach, 69-85. Stofik devotes a whole chapter in Saving South Beach to Abe Resnick which chronicles his personal history as well as his opposition to historic preservation. Throughout the book Abe Resnick is noted for his role as an opponent in the fight to preserve South Beach’s Art Deco district.
visit . . . like in a nice park.” Helene Owen, chairwoman of the Garden Center Conservatory Committee commented, “We are definitely not against the principle of the thing. But we ask that our gardens be completed the way we were promised.” Past president of the Garden Club Conservatory Committee, Helen Dean fiercely opposed the memorial, “The Garden Center is not the place for it. Our place is a happy place.” Resnick tried to respond to the ladies of the Garden Center’s objections by noting that it was not their desire to take over the center, merely add to it, “You come inside and you don’t see anything. These ladies have actually isolated themselves. They’re very much concerned that anything should happen to their baby. They started a war because they didn’t understand, they still don’t understand, what happened here. This community has changed in the last 30 or 40 years. We don’t want to fight. We’re going to listen to their ideas, they should be a part of us.” During the course of two public meetings in November and December of 1984, one for the Miami Beach Planning Board followed by another for the City Commission a week later, the ladies of the Garden Center lost their battle and a little over an acre of the proposed center’s expansion was approved for the Holocaust Memorial.

Designing the Memorial: The Politics of Aesthetics

On April 5, 1985, architect—and fellow committee member—Kenneth Treister was commissioned by the Holocaust Memorial Committee:

a) To design a memorial to the memory of the Jewish culture and individuals destroyed by the Holocaust; b) To create a memorial garden that would give survivors and those who lost loved ones a place to visit in lieu of the cemetery they do not have; c) To express in photographs and sculpture the history and sorrow of the Holocaust so future generations will never forget.

According to Treister, during the five years it took to complete the memorial himself and fellow committee member Dr. Helen Fagin spent a period of time viewing Holocaust photographs at the

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179 Ibid.
181 Ibid.
182 There are two *Miami Herald* articles that further detail the passionate pleas from local Holocaust survivors, who were bused to the meetings by Abe Resnick, and told their heart wrenching stories of the ordeals they went through during the Holocaust, and of the loved ones they lost. Paul Shannon, “Pleas Sway Vote for Holocaust Plaza,” *Miami Herald*, 28 November 1984, 1D. Paul Shannon, “Beach OKs Holocaust Memorial in Park,” *Miami Herald*, 6 December 1984, 2C.
183 Kenneth Treister, “Some Notes by the Sculptor,” (Miami Beach: Holocaust Memorial, 1990), 1.
University of Miami Library and Treister personally travelled to Israel on three separate occasions to study at the archives at Yad Vashem and to work on the details of the Jerusalem stone to be used in the Memorial. In June 1986, Kenneth Treister revealed his plans for the proposed memorial to the city’s Design Review Board, which unanimously approved the design. Treister’s early design of the memorial called for a 72-foot bronze statue of an upraised arm with life-size human figures clinging to it. The arm would be surrounded by a circular reflecting pool with water lilies, a semi-circular colonnade, and a stand of royal palms.

The design of this memorial would prove to be the biggest controversy to face the Holocaust Memorial. Many members of the local art community expressed their displeasure with the proposed design of the memorial. Several members of the community viewed it as “grotesque.” An associate professor of art at the University of Miami, Paula Harper, expressed a similar sentiment, when she was quoted as saying, “This grotesque effigy of a dismembered fragment of a human limb of this obscene size will be an embarrassment to Miami Beach.” She later went on to add, “I think it is extremely banal and diminishes the Holocaust experience. It’s not good art.” Treister defended his sculpture explaining, “The upraised arm depicts the agony of the Holocaust and the Jews’ struggle for survival. It asks a question. ‘Is there a God? Is there a heaven?’ It also says, ‘Save me.’”

The Garden Center did not accept the design of the memorial quietly either. Chairwoman of the Garden Center advisory Committee Helene Owen issued a letter on April 23, 1987, to the city commissioners asking them to reconsider the design. In the letter Owen called the design “overdone and repugnant…the outstretched arm is a symbol of fascism,” and also wrote that the city’s design approval process was “dictatorial, domineering and overbearing and not in accordance with the democratic process.”

Some of the debate over the sculpture stemmed from the fact that the public had no say at all in the process of the establishment of a public memorial on public land. Opponent, Marcia

184 Ibid.
186 Editorial, “Memorial Should Be More Subdued,” Sun-Sentinel, 5 May 1987, 10A.
188 Buddy Nevins, “Solemn Sight Miami Beach Sculpture Honors Holocaust Victims. –‘Arm of Six Million,’” Sun-Sentinel, 3 February 1990, 3B.
Green, argued: “The citizens of Miami Beach have been deprived of the right to influence the philosophical, financial, artistic and land use decisions of a major privately funded memorial on public land in the heart of the city.” In cases of prominent public monuments there is usually a national competition to pick a design, but in this case the members of the committee chose the design alone which annoyed many members of the art community. In this case though, the Holocaust Memorial Committee commissioned local developer and committee member, Kenneth Treister, to create and design the memorial. The Holocaust Committee did eventually compromise on the design. The sculpture was originally proposed to be 72 feet tall, which was one of the big contentions because it could be seen from as far away as a half-mile, eventually however, the design was scaled down to 42 feet high.

Opponents to the memorial were not the only members of the community to voice their opinions on the Memorial. Many supporters of the memorial spoke out in favor of the design and for the necessity of the memorial. In response to claims that the “Sculpture of Love and Anguish” is grotesque, supporters of the monument, such as committee member, Rabbi Solomon Schiff, argued that, “You can’t memorialize a tragic event with something soothing and beautiful.” Fellow committee member and survivor, Helen Fagin, also spoke out in support of the sculpture with her own statement: “It [the “Sculpture of Love and Anguish”] has not been built to satisfy the aesthetic taste of art critics. It is there to convey a message, inform people of the horror that was done.” Survivors overwhelmingly supported the memorial as a site for them to visit and remember their loved ones who were victims of the Holocaust and as a site for future generations to remember what happened so that it cannot happen again.

**Other Conflicts: Religious Affiliation? Political Statements? And the “5 million others”**

Other minor points of contention that came to light during the creation of the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach included questions of church and state, a potential political incident regarding a plaque, and complaints of the Jewish exclusivity of the victims memorialized. There were those in the local community who complained that the City’s support of the memorial

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192 Nevins, “Solemn Sight,” 3B.
194 James D. Davis, “Holocaust Memorial Stirs Debate,” *Sun-Sentinel*, 25 April 1987, 1B.
195 Nevins, “Solemn Sight,” 3B.
amounted to a breach in the constitutional right of separation between church and state. In an editorial published in the *Miami Herald* on February 24, 1988, the writer proclaims, “IT’S JUST not right to dedicate city land in Miami Beach to the veneration of an exclusively Jewish list of Holocaust victims. A religious test for any public benefit clearly violates the separation of church and state.”197 This editorial illustrates another issue that people had with the memorial: its Jewish focus.

Many members of the community were upset that the memorial ignored the 5 million other non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. The Holocaust Memorial contains over a hundred blank, black granite slabs along the interior walls of the memorial in order to accommodate the names of Jewish loved ones who perished in the Holocaust. Committee members promoted the memorial internationally in order to garner as many Jewish names as possible for the wall. The wall can hold approximately 65,000 names and space is limited to a first-come, first-served basis. The committee members ask for a $36 donation in order to have their loved ones names forever immortalized on the memorial’s walls.198 Richard Wolfson, a Miami attorney, commented, “I think it’s wrong community relations-wise to erect this on public land. It’s essentially a monument to a single religion.”199 Committee members responded to this and similar complaints by asserting that Jews were the only ethnic group singled out by Hitler, as Rabbi Solomon Schiff noted, “…But the Holocaust was uniquely a Jewish experience, because for no other group was the term ‘final solution’ designed, except for Jews.”200 The Committee had no plans to verify the names of those submitted to be on the wall, an important fact that seems to be largely ignored by both sides. Currently the memorial has approximately 25,000 names inscribed on its granite walls.201

Another politicized incident in the memorial’s history involved a plaque, thanking the city commissioners who helped in the establishment of the memorial. The commissioners voted on the plaque and then had it installed on one of the walls near the entrance to the memorial without ever consulting any of the Memorial Committee members. Many of the Memorial Committee members believed Abe Resnick, fellow member and city commissioner was largely

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199 Ibid.
200 Ibid.
201 Holocaust Memorial Miami Beach, “Methods to Support the Holocaust Memorial,” http://www.holocaustmmb.org/.
responsible for the plaque although he denied any part in it.\textsuperscript{202} The plaque angered the members of the Holocaust Memorial Committee who tried to remove the plaque when it was discovered the next day.\textsuperscript{203} Norman Braman, chairman of the Holocaust Memorial Committee told a reporter for the \textit{Miami Herald}, “‘This plaque is desecrating this memorial’…The plaque was ‘an effort to politicize this memorial.’”\textsuperscript{204} Due to the uproar that the committee members made over the plaque and their thwarted efforts to remove it, the Miami Beach Commission met the next day and voted for it to be removed immediately.\textsuperscript{205} Although the controversy surrounding the plaque was short lived, the incident serves as an example of the power and influence the memorial and its committee has on the local community. As soon as the committee members became disgruntled over the situation, it was given immediate action to resolve the issue.

\textbf{February 4, 1990: Dedication and Education}

On February 4, 1990, the memorial was finally completed after six years of conflict and the dedication ceremony took place with guest speaker, Elie Wiesel, Nobel Laureate and well-known Holocaust survivor. The memorial is open to the public, free of charge, every day of the year from nine in the morning until nine in the evening. In addition to public tours, the Memorial also hosts two educational community events every year. One event is held on Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day and the other is held on the anniversary of Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass. Both events are held on site and usually include survivor testimony, a candle lighting ceremony, and a musical performance. The Memorial will also, on occasion bring in a lecturer on the Holocaust and go around the South Florida area at venues such as public libraries in various cities in the tri-county area.\textsuperscript{206}

Support for the memorial only continued to grow once the memorial opened to the public in 1990. Members of the local community who visited the memorial spoke out in favor of the Holocaust Memorial. In an editorial in the \textit{Miami Herald}, David Lawrence Jr., wrote of his visit to the memorial:

\begin{quote}
Twice I have visited the Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach, most recently last Sunday afternoon with my wife and our three younger children, ages 13, 10, and 5. That visit
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{202} Bonnie Weston, “Plaque Removed From Holocaust Memorial,” \textit{Miami Herald}, 7 March 1991, 2B.
\bibitem{203} Bonnie Weston, “Braman Tries to Pry Plaque Off Memorial,” \textit{Miami Herald}, 6 March 1991, 1B.
\bibitem{204} Ibid.
\bibitem{205} Bonnie Weston, “Plaque Removed From Holocaust Memorial,” 2B.
\bibitem{206} Interview with Lida Shukrie, November 25, 2009.
\end{thebibliography}
was more important than anything that they have learned on any single day during the whole school year.\textsuperscript{207}

Even students who visited the memorial on a school field trip were supportive of the memorial and the message it sends to its visitors. Lesley Katzen, of Beth Am School was quoted in the \textit{Miami Herald} following her trip to the memorial, “I think of the people who refuse to believe that the Holocaust ever happened. And I am glad the Holocaust Memorial was put here to remind everyone that it did happen.”\textsuperscript{208}

According to interim director, Lida Shukrie, anywhere from two to four schools visit the memorial every day, Monday through Friday (sometimes on weekends) from schools all across the state, not just South Florida. The Memorial prefers to only take students from the fifth grade level and above (including university students) because it is harder for the younger students to fully comprehend the events that took place and the lesson to be learned. Approximately 500 students per school visit the memorial, and each tour group consists of 50-60 students. The Memorial also offers guided tours for Jewish and non-Jewish organizational groups and military groups.\textsuperscript{209}

When the students first arrive they are greeted by a Holocaust survivor. The Memorial usually has two volunteer survivors on hand to give tours; one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Students are then led to a classroom on site where they watch a 45 minute video about the creation of the memorial before going on the tour. The video chronicles the four years it took to physically build the memorial and its many sculptures and includes an interview with the sculptor, Kenneth Treister, who explained the process of building the sculptures and also his aesthetic interpretation and symbolism that can be found within the memorial itself.

After the video, the students are then taken on a guided tour with the survivor. The survivor goes through all the different pictures displayed in The Arbor of History section and asks the students about each picture and what it represents. As the survivor leads the students through the memorial, they relate their own personal testimony of their experience to tie into the general information they are given in the beginning of the tour. When asked about the difference in age groups of the tours he’s given, survivor and volunteer guide for the past three years, Israel

\textsuperscript{207} David Lawrence Jr., “Remind Everyone That it Did Happen,” \textit{Miami Herald}, 15 July 1990, 3C.
\textsuperscript{208} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{209} Interview with Lida Shukrie, November 25, 2009.
Gruenspan responded that the older students, generally high school age, asked not only more questions, but more engaging questions than younger students who take the tour.\textsuperscript{210}

The memorial began to be used immediately by teachers as a part of Holocaust lesson plans in school classrooms even before it was mandated to be taught in 1994. Miriam Kassenoff, a high school English teacher, started bringing her students to the memorial as part of her lesson plans since the memorial opened in 1990; 4 years before the Holocaust Education Bill was passed.\textsuperscript{211} The Holocaust Documentation and Education Center located at Florida International University, developed a curriculum for teachers to use in their classrooms that offered a more comprehensive look at the Holocaust then the few lines that were offered in classroom textbooks.\textsuperscript{212} As part of this new curriculum (again, instituted before the state mandated legislation in 1994), teachers are also encouraged to take their students to the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach.\textsuperscript{213} The eventual state legislation requiring the Holocaust be taught in public schools only increased the number of students and expanded the visitor demographics to those outside the tri-county area.

The Holocaust Memorial in Miami Beach has succeeded at both memorializing the Jewish victims of the Holocaust and at educating the general public of the history of the Holocaust. More than 10,000 children a year visit the memorial through their local schools as a result of the 1994 Florida mandate to teach the Holocaust in public schools.\textsuperscript{214} Even before the mandate was passed though, hundreds of local school children came to the memorial and witnessed through the history told in the memorial and through the volunteer guides who are actual Holocaust survivors, the story of the Jewish plight in the Holocaust.

\textbf{The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach: A Powerful Visual Journey}

The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach is a visually stunning outdoor memorial plaza that gives its own sense of place that separates itself from the busy and crowded streets of Miami Beach’s South Beach district. The large open air plaza is composed entirely of Jerusalem Stone which is what sets the space apart from the surrounding area. While there is a defined beginning

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{210} Interview with Israel Gruenspan, November 25, 2009.
  \item \textsuperscript{212} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{213} Ibid.
  \item \textsuperscript{214} Casey Woods, “Holocaust Memorial Looks to Past, and Future,” \textit{Miami Herald}, 14 November 2004, 2L.
\end{itemize}
and ending point for the memorial, it is possible for the casual observer to wander about, although there is only one pathway through the memorial and they would not get the historical context that is presented at the beginning of the memorial. Architect and sculptor Kenneth Treister explained that, “I created the Memorial as a large environmental sculpture…a series of outdoor spaces in which the visitor is led through a procession of visual, historical and emotional experiences with the hope that the totality of the visit will express, in some small way, the reality of the Holocaust.”

The photographs that follow are essential, as they help illustrate the powerful imagery that the memorial uses to tell the history of the Holocaust and to memorialize the six million Jews who perished. Some of the descriptions of the various sections of the memorial come from a copy of Kenneth Treister’s notes on the memorial.

“A Garden for Meditation” refers to the memorial plaza itself which is, as previously stated, made of Jerusalem Stone and contains a 200 foot diameter water lily pond and a semi-circular colonnade and arbor set against a backdrop of lush green palm trees.

![A Garden for Meditation](image)

Figure 3.1: A Garden for Meditation. Photo by the author.

“The Beginning” is the name of the first sculpture that the visitor is greeted by. This sculpture depicts a mother and her two children who look fearful as the signs of the Holocaust

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begin to appear. Along with this sculpture is an accompanying quote from Anne Frank which is carved into the wall of Jerusalem Stone behind the sculpture, “Then in spite of everything I still believe that people are really good at heart.” The use of this particular Anne Frank quote sets the visitor up for a journey that appears to be redemptive in nature; however that mood does not carry through by the end of the memorial.

“The Arbor of History” is the next part of the memorial that that visitor experiences. The Arbor of History is the semi-circular colonnade of Jerusalem Stone columns which support a wooden arbor covered in white bougainvillea vines. According to Mr. Treister, the white flowers on the bougainvillea represent the six million Jewish victims and the few colored flowers represent the survivors.216 Opposite the columns is a wall of black granite slabs that is etched with some archival photographs depicting some of the atrocities that took place during the Holocaust and also contains a brief history of the events from 1933-1945 as written by Dr. Helen Fagin, founding committee member and historian.

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“The Dome of Contemplation” is located in the middle of the semi-circular colonnade and consists of a small area enclosed by a dome and a semi-circular wall which holds an eternal memorial flame and an inscription from Psalm 23:4. At the top of the dome is a small circle of yellow glass with a Star of David and the word Jude in the center of it that lets in a small shaft of yellow light.
“The Lonely Path” is where the visitor begins the final stretch before they reach the main sculpture of the memorial. This pathway is enclosed by Jerusalem Stone on all sides with small slits carved in the sides of the wall and the ceiling to let in small amounts of light and mimics the view that people had from the inside of the cattle cars that brought the Nazi’s victims to the camps. The walls of the tunnel are also carved with the names of many of the camps such as Chelmno, Mauthausen, Treblinka, and Buchenwald for example. The tunnel is also filled with the sound of Israeli children singing songs which are very haunting and create a dark and solemn mood as the visitor makes their way to the main sculpture garden.

Figure 3.6: The Lonely Path. Photo by the author.

Emerging from the Lonely Path, visitors are confronted with “The Sculpture of Love and Anguish.” This is Kenneth Treister’s depiction of the Holocaust. The main sculpture here depicts a large outstretched arm with a tattooed number from Auschwitz reaching towards the sky. All along the arm are “A Series of Vignettes,” dozens of figures that look visibly tormented and desperate to escape from the arm they so desperately cling to and according to Treister, “families try to help each other in a final act of love…all expressing the mixed emotions of terror and compassion.”

Among the Sculpture of Love and Anguish are several free standing, life-sized bronze figures located in various places within this space. These figures are referred to as

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217 Triester, “Some Notes by the Sculptor,” 1.
“Sensing Both Love and Fear” as you see figures try to console one another while at the same time feeling the same fear as the other.

Figure 3.7: The Sculpture of Love and Anguish
Figure 3.8: Close-up depicting some of the “Series of Vignettes.”

Figure 3.9: An Example of “Sensing Both Love and Anguish.”
Figure 3.10: Another Example of “Sensing Both Love and Anguish.”
“The Memorial Wall,” which can be seen surrounding the “Sculpture of Love and Anguish” is composed of black granite panels that go around the circular space of the sculpture garden, and then also extends along the last half of the semi-circular colonnade. The Memorial Wall, a source of funding for the memorial, is where the names of Holocaust victims are displayed, much like that of the Vietnam Memorial, only people pay to have their loved ones names etched into the black granite walls, and there is hardly room for the names of every person who was a victim of the Holocaust. There are currently over 109 panels filled with names of Holocaust victims with several panels still available to be filled in the future.

Figure 3.11: The Memorial Wall. Photo by the author.

The journey through the memorial ends at “The Final Sculpture.” Here visitors are met with the same figures of the mother and her two children from “The Beginning” except now they are dead. Again the words of Anne Frank are set against the backdrop of this sculpture, “Ideals, dreams and cherished hopes rise within us only to meet the horrible truth and be shattered.” This quote and sculpture are a far cry from the hopeful redeeming quote and sculpture at the beginning of the memorial. The use of these two quotes and images portrays the reality of Jewish sentiments both on the eve of the Holocaust and its conclusion at the end of the war. There was an underlying belief that things would not get any worse, and that they would get through this time as they had throughout history during times of persecution as long as they followed along with the new laws of the government. Following the events of the Holocaust however, the harsh reality of what had happened left little room
for hopes and dreams for those who fell victim to the Nazis’ brutality and those who felt they had been abandoned by God.

The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach is a powerful testament to the horrors of the Holocaust, while simultaneously providing a calm and serene place for visitors to remember the men, women, and children who lost their lives in the Holocaust and ensure that future generations will know what happened when the survivors are no longer around to tell their story. Representing the Holocaust in the aesthetic way that the Holocaust Memorial Committee has done is not easy to accomplish, but in the words of the sculptor Kenneth Treister:

The totality of the Holocaust cannot be created in stone and bronze…but I had to try. The rich diversity of the European Jewish culture, now lost, cannot be expressed…but I had to try. The murder of one and one-half million children whose joys turned to sorrow suddenly on September 1, 1939, when World War II broke out, cannot be sculpted…but I had to try. Six million moments of death cannot be understood…but we all must try.218

The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach is unique in that it is both calming and shocking at the same time. Instead of using metal and brick and barbed wire as many other artistic

218 Ibid.
representations of the Holocaust do, this memorial uses brighter and more natural material that gives the memorial plaza a more serene ambiance. The memorial also provides a sense of place to both the large Holocaust survivor and large Jewish population in South Florida who may not have a place to mourn and/or celebrate the lives of their loved ones who died in the Holocaust. Although the memorial only stands for the six million Jews who died in the Holocaust, it is not out of place given the large Jewish population in South Florida, and also is not that uncommon seeing as many permanent museum exhibitions on the Holocaust focus on the Jewish victims with minimal space devoted to the five million others.

The Legacy of the Memorial

The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach is a memorial plaza and garden dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust. Every day the memorial stands as a testament to the atrocities that happened to the Jewish people during Hitler’s reign as Germany’s Chancellor. The Memorial had its fair share of controversies and opponents to its creation ranging from the land it inhabits, the design of the memorial itself, to the focus of the victims the committee chose to memorialize. Despite all of the many conflicts that arose during its development, the memorial was installed with very limited concessions made to please its opponents and remains as popular today as it was when it first opened to the public almost twenty years ago. The large number of visitors that visit the memorial every day/week/month/year attests to the need the community had for this type of site. South Florida still has the second largest survivor population in North America, however, that population is becoming more and more elderly, and sooner than some people may realize, there will not be anyone who can stand up and speak as a personal witness to the events of the Holocaust. This is possibly the most important reason for the memorial’s existence, and also may explain the rise in sites dedicated to the memory of the Holocaust in recent years. During his interview, Israel Gruenspan reiterated this point; that soon the last of the survivors will be gone. Who then will be able to speak on their behalf? Who will tell their story? Who will make sure the memory of their tragedy lives on for future generations to learn and carry on? Well, the answer is not so much “who” but “what.” Holocaust sites such as the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach will still be there when the survivors are not. The Memorial will continue to teach the children of future generations about one of the greatest tragedies of the twentieth century.
The public memory that is displayed here at this memorial is in stark contrast to that of the other Holocaust institutions in Florida. The survivors who built this memorial chose to focus on the pain and horror of the event in its sculptural depictions of the past. Although the overall effect of the memorial plaza, when taken as a whole, is calm and tranquil, when the visitor is confronted with the images that have been cast in bronze they are shown the true horror of man’s inhumanity to man and cannot look away as it is shown in every angle. This memorial has ensured that the memory of the horror of the Holocaust will endure for future generations.
CONCLUSION

Since the late 1970s there has been a growing increase in the public recognition of the Holocaust as a major historical event of the 20th century. As the Holocaust moved closer to the forefront of the American public’s mind through various means, including film and television, the need for a place to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust and also tell the story of the Holocaust in a more permanent physical space began to come apparent to many people across the U.S. Not only did people see a need to preserve the memory of the Holocaust for future generations, but they also saw a need to increase the teaching of it in schools. Prior to Florida’s Holocaust Education mandate in 1994, only three states had legislation in regards to requiring Holocaust education in school curriculum; those states were California, New Jersey, and Washington.219 Five states, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Ohio, and Nevada, had commissions or task forces established which encouraged Holocaust education in the classroom and provided resources for teachers, but did not mandate the lessons.220 Presently, there are twenty-eight states that have neither state-mandated Holocaust legislation, nor a state sponsored Holocaust resource for teachers, such as a task force or commission.221 Bringing Holocaust memory to the American people in public and national forums, such as museums, has generated a greater public support and drive for Holocaust education at the local level and can be attributed to the increase in Holocaust education programs and museums that have been established since 1980 when the United States Holocaust Memorial Council was established to create the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

The USHMM took twelve years to plan and design before it finally opened in 1992 due to the politics and controversies that continuously plagued its creation. Despite its contentious start, the USHMM stands as a model for subsequent Holocaust museums to follow. While it is logical for Holocaust museums to follow a chronological pattern to best show the progression of discrimination and racist ideology and its eventual culmination in the Final Solution, the way that the USHMM designed certain aspects of their permanent exhibition have been copied in later Holocaust museums in Florida. Of the four Holocaust institutions in Florida, three of them

220 Ibid.
221 Ibid.
have multiple similarities in their permanent exhibition to that of the USHMM’s. The one museum that does not have any defining similarities to the USHMM is the one that was completed years before the USHMM opened, the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida in Maitland.

The most common exhibit design elements that can be seen in the Holocaust museums in Florida that mimic that of the USHMM include: reproductions of the “Arbeit Macht Frei” sign from Auschwitz, large displays of photographs of Jewish families before World War II reminiscent of Yaffa Eliach’s tower of photographs of the Ejszyszki shtetl in Lithuania, video witness testimonies at the end of the exhibition, authentic WWII era boxcars used to transport Jews and other victims, and forced pathways through the exhibit that have few places to rest and only one beginning and ending point.

Despite the similarities that these institutions share with the USHMM, they still have their own elements that make them unique, especially to their communities. Each Holocaust institution in Florida offers something different that separates itself from all the other Holocaust museums and personalizes it and makes it relevant for the local community it serves. It is not true to say that if you’ve seen one Holocaust museum, you’ve seen them all; while the story is always the same, the sights and sounds differ.

The best example of local community influence on a museum would have to be the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida in Naples. The youngest of the existing Holocaust museums (not counting the South Florida Holocaust Museum as it is still in development), the HMSWFL contains an abundance of artifacts from local survivors and liberators in the Southwest Florida community. Every nook and cranny of this museum is filled with artifacts that have, for the most part, been donated by locals. These artifacts give the museum a much more personal touch then other Holocaust museums. The HMSWFL also covers topics in its permanent exhibition that are not shown in the other Holocaust museums in Florida including a section on the Shanghai Ghetto in China and a rather extensive list of companies that were affiliated with concentration camps.

The HMSWFL is not the only Holocaust museum in Florida to include artifacts and ephemera from local survivors and liberators. The Florida Holocaust Museum in St. Petersburg, the Holocaust Center in Maitland, and the future South Florida Holocaust Museum all have artifacts on display from the local community, but they are not displayed as largely as they are at
the Holocaust museum in Naples. The Florida Holocaust Museum has a larger audience than the other Florida museums as it reaches out to the entire Southeastern United States and therefore has more in common with the USHMM than the other smaller institutions do. The FHM has a broader audience and therefore has less of a small town museum feel than the other institutions in Florida; however it does include some local artifacts in its displays and includes local survivor and witness testimonies in its Survivor Testimony Theatre at the end of the permanent exhibition.

The Holocaust Center in Maitland, although it has the least design elements in common with the USHMM, does personalize its small permanent exhibition with an example of local prejudice and Holocaust denial in the form of a letter from the local Ku Klux Klan chapter that was sent to the museum shortly after it opened. While it is only one example that is used in the exhibition it is powerful for the small scale that the exhibition has. The permanent exhibition is text and image heavy with few artifacts and is contained entirely in one large room. This letter is displayed at the start of the exhibition which shows local members of the community that the lessons of the Holocaust are still pertinent to their society today.

The future South Florida Holocaust Museum, the future of the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center, will also contain many of the same design elements that have been seen in the other Florida Holocaust institutions which have been replicated from the USHMM; however it too will also contain elements that make it representative of its local South Florida community. The South Florida Holocaust Museum will be the first Holocaust museum in North America to contain exhibits in both English and Spanish, a reflection of the large Hispanic community that lives in South Florida. The future SFHM permanent exhibition will also contain artifacts that the Center has been collecting from local survivors, liberators, and witnesses over the past twenty-nine years as well as video testimonies from their vast oral history collection.

Museums however are not the only type of public institution that exist to both memorialize the victims of the Holocaust and to educate younger and future generations about the Holocaust and future genocide prevention. Monuments and memorials also exist in the public sphere as a visual testament to public memory, such as the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach. Despite the different objections that the Memorial Committee faced during the planning and designing of the Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach, the memorial stands resolutely as a site of public memory of the Holocaust that creates a sense of community for local Holocaust
survivors and as a source of information for men and women of all ages about what happened between the years of 1933 and 1945.

The Holocaust Memorial on Miami Beach was completed in 1990, three years before the USHMM opened, but the committee for the memorial was formed in 1984, four years after the United States Holocaust Memorial Council was established. President Carter’s action to build a memorial museum to the victims of the Holocaust, regardless of his true intentions for it, became a catalyst for men and women in Florida to organize together to build their own local sites of remembrance, whether it be a museum or a memorial.

Florida’s Holocaust museums and memorials stand as a site of public memory of the Holocaust in their respective communities. They were all started by individuals who gathered together for a common goal, to preserve the memory of the Holocaust for future generations and to increase education for future genocide prevention. These institutions, despite some objections, were overall warmly accepted into their respective communities and have become a cultural and historical landmark for visitors and residents alike. These sites of Holocaust memory have also all been largely incorporated into the local schools’ curriculum, with a large part of their visitorship being school groups, which is also thanks in large part to the 1994 Holocaust Education Bill that requires the Holocaust be taught in public schools at all grade levels, K-12.

These institutions have become intrinsically linked with their communities. They were started by local residents and they were originally built for the local community and made up of artifacts and ephemera that were donated by local residents. With the support of their local communities these organizations were able to grow and thrive beyond their original goals and continue to exist, and in some cases continue to grow and expand, and serve their local communities. The two word adage, “Never Forget,” has been a popular sentiment among American Jews in the last half of the twentieth century as they work to preserve the memory of the Holocaust and inform younger generations of what can happen when bigotry and violence go unchecked. These institutions ensure that future generations “Never Forget” the memory of those who perished or stand idly by as a silent witness to persecution or genocide.
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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Nicole Hoekstra was born in Margate, Florida on June 20, 1985, and divided her time growing up between both Ft. Lauderdale and Ocala, Florida. She received her Bachelor’s Degree in History from Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida in 2007. From 2006-2007 Nicole worked as an intern, and then as a docent and Town Hall greeter at the Boca Raton Historical Society. In 2008, Nicole began the Master’s program in Historical Administration and Public History through the History Department at Florida State University, along with an additional certificate in Museum Studies. During her time in Tallahassee, Nicole worked as an intern, and then as the interim office manager at the Tallahassee Trust for Historic Preservation. In the summer of 2010, Nicole worked as an intern at the Holocaust Documentation and Education Center in Hollywood, Florida where she helped digitize their memorabilia collection and develop an educational component for their rail car.