

LEGACY

Keeping the History and Lessons of the Holocaust Alive



Summer/Fall 2015

DATES TO REMEMBER

Friedman Scholarship Reception
August 9, 2015

L'Chaim 2015
August 23, 2015

TDIL / DIL Exhibitions
Vulcan Park (DIL)
September 15-March 16

Alabama School of Fine Arts
January 5-29, 2016

Riverchase Middle School
February 1-5, 2016

Teacher Cadre Programs
October 6, 2015
November 17, 2015
January 28, 2016
March 10, 2016

Teacher Workshops
University of West Alabama
November 2, 2015

Troy University
November 3, 2015

University of Alabama/Huntsville
January 11, 2016

Samford University
January 12, 2016

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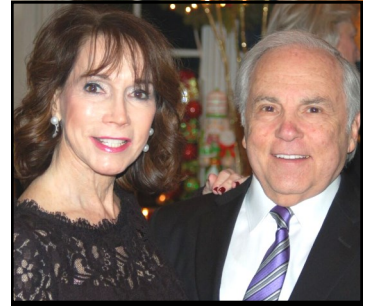
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An Afternoon of Education, Entertainment & Tribute

The BHEC's annual *L'Chaim* ("to life") event will be at the beautiful Dorothy Jemison Day Theatre at the Alabama School of Fine Arts on Sunday, August 23, 2:30-4:00 pm.

As always, *L'Chaim* celebrates the conclusion of our summer fundraising campaign with a program combining music, drama, education, and acknowledgement of the contribution of members of the community to the work of the BHEC. We hope you're planning to join us!

This year's theme is Honoring Holocaust Educators. You'll hear about innovative classroom projects that have had a huge impact on students. Our special honorees are Brenda and Fred Friedman who, for the last decade, have funded scholarships for Alabama teachers to attend advanced training seminars in New York, Washington, Europe and Israel. Some highlights are:



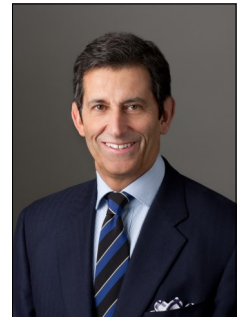
Brenda and Fred Friedman

Keynote Speaker: General Charles Krulak

General Krulak, whose paternal grandfather was Jewish, has embraced the mission of the BHEC and its importance not only for Birmingham and Alabama, but for the world. He will share his thoughts at *L'Chaim*.



General Krulak



Jeffrey Bayer

What We Saw: In the Words of the Liberators

In commemoration of the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the camps, Deborah Layman has written a new dramatic reading based on the first-person accounts of two liberators from Alabama: George Mitnick of Jasper, the father of Ronne Hess, and Travis Ray Carter of Gravel Springs in Marion County. The reading by members of The Seasoned Performers will include music by Alan Goldspiel and Cantor Jessica Roskin.

Special Music

L'Chaim will include performances by local recording artist Gabriel Tajou and the Birmingham Community Mass Choir.

As always, a dessert reception featuring delicious home-baked treats will follow the program.

Tickets are \$50 (\$25 for students). Purchase online at lchaim.swellgives.com. We hope to see you on August 23!

Crowdfunding—Something New for the BHEC!

This year's *L'Chaim* fundraising campaign features a new, 21st century component: online crowdfunding. This gives us the opportunity to greatly increase the reach of our fundraising efforts!

It's simple: When you purchase a *L'Chaim* ticket or make a donation online, you automatically get a personal fundraising page with information about the BHEC and the campaign. You can post the link on social media pages like Facebook or simply email it to your family and friends anywhere in the country with a personal note inviting them to join you in supporting the work of the BHEC. You get credit for every donation made through your page, and you can watch your progress on the leader board online.

During the *L'Chaim* reception, we'll have one final online fundraising push, and watch in real time as the totals increase! Max Rykov, a local promoter, will emcee the fundraising at the reception. Join the fun and support this important effort to keep the history and lessons of the Holocaust alive!



Max Rykov

Letter from the President

Phyllis Weinstein, President

The BHEC office is buzzing with activity this summer!

L'Chaim plans are unfolding with exciting responses. We are so pleased to bring recognition and grateful thanks to Brenda and Fred Friedman, our *L'Chaim* 2015 honorees, and more than proud that General Charles Krulak, recently retired President of Birmingham Southern College, and Jeffrey Bayer, last year's *L'Chaim* honoree, are chairing our fundraising campaign. Key to our success is the very dedicated and diverse Host Committee, and we thank them for their efforts to ensure this campaign's success.

Alongside this major undertaking, we are working to bring our infrastructure to conform to the recommendations set forth at our Strategic Planning Workshop: writing amendments to our bylaws, and most importantly, adopting a new mission statement that sets forth our dreams and aspirations as we move forward:

The mission of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) is to educate the people of Alabama about the history of the Holocaust so that new generations will apply the lessons of the Holocaust to the construction of a more just, humane, and tolerant future. By preserving and sharing the stories of local Holocaust survivors and commemorating the events of the Holocaust and the lives of those who perished, the BHEC seeks to promote a moral and ethical response to prejudice, hatred, and indifference for the benefit of all humanity.

Each of our 22 volunteer Board members serves on at least one of our six major committees. They bring fresh ideas to recommend to the board that keep our organization vibrant and ever changing as we seek new avenues to reach our goal of educating our citizens, preserving Holocaust stories, and commemorating Holocaust events.

We are indebted to Glynnis Fisher-Levitt for conducting and guiding us through our strategic planning session, resulting in the beneficial major changes in our organization structure, and to Barbara Bonfield, an ex-officio BHEC board member, for chairing the rewriting of the BHEC bylaws.

Not only has our internal program progressed and improved, but our physical office space is transforming as well! Our space has been enhanced with the addition of three art pieces on loan from Dr. Barry Ivker, and the generous donation of *Shtetl* by Marius Sznajderman. We thank his son, Michael Sznajderman, for thinking of the BHEC for the permanent home for this beautiful lithograph. We thank Kelly Kahn, also an ex-officio BHEC board member, for her work in hanging these large pieces of art and creating a "poster event wall" for our review and pleasure.



Deborah Layman, General Krulak, & Phyllis Weinstein

We have a saying that "we never know who will walk through our door." Such was the case when Dolores Hydock made a special visit to tell us about her upcoming one woman show, *Becoming Dr. Ruth* at the Terrific New Theater. She came with wonderful news that TNT planned to donate the receipts from one showing to the BHEC! We are grateful to TNT for this gift from a sold out amazing performance by Dolores. We were thrilled to be included in this exciting endeavor.

Anticipating an important educational year, we will continue reaching out to our community with ever increasing knowledge and information of our Holocaust survivors, involving our educators in outstanding training



Rebecca Dobrinski and Dr. Ruth Westheimer

Traveling Exhibitions

This fall, the BHEC's *Darkness Into Life* exhibit – the original artwork – will be on display at Vulcan Park and Museum in Birmingham. Our staff has been working with Vulcan Park on the display as well as potential programs for the exhibition period (September 2015-May 2016). We are thrilled this exhibition will be seen by so many visitors to Birmingham and school groups throughout the 2015-16 school year!

While *Darkness Into Life* is "on the road," the BHEC office renovations will continue. We will be painting the walls and moving the archives to an interior room previously used for storage. But this does not mean there will not be an exhibit to see at the office! The students of Ardmore High School created a sculpture exhibition based on Holocaust survivor stories. The students used packing tape to create the sculptures and some also worked on watercolor paintings. These works, plus the Auschwitz model created by the Ful-tondale High School students, will be on display.

Scheduling the traveling version of *Darkness Into Life* for the next school year has already begun! The exhibition will be on display in January at the Alabama School of Fine Arts in Birmingham and at Riverchase Middle School in Hoover in February. Other schools have submitted letters of interest, and we expect another full schedule for *DIL* this year!

Telling the Stories

Denise Lewis, VP

It has been a very busy year for our Speakers Bureau! From September 2014 through June 2015, over 4,000 adults and students have listened and witnessed the stories of our Alabama Holocaust survivors. The impact these stories have on their audience is remarkable, and the BHEC is so fortunate to be able to fill the many requests we receive for speakers. We also welcomed three school groups to our office to tour the *Darkness Into Life* exhibit and to hear from artist Mitzi J. Levin and a survivor.

Our speakers got a lot of mileage in this year:

Max Herzel: Lakeside Baptist Church, Birmingham; Auburn University, Montgomery; Federal Bureau of Investigation, Birmingham; Moody Senior Center; Houston Academy, Dothan (via Skype); Hewitt-Trussville High School; Homewood Middle School; Helena Middle School; West Point Middle School, Cullman; Ruth Remnant Ministry, Dothan (via Skype); Rutledge Middle School, Midfield; Oxford Middle School; Prattville Lions Club.

Riva Hirsch: Church of the Highlands Women's Group, Birmingham; The Women's Network of Birmingham.

Robert May & Ann Mollengarden: Ardmore High School (BHEC office); Jacksonville State University; Brookwood Forest Elementary, Birmingham; Riverchase Middle School, Birmingham; Shades Valley High School, Birmingham.

Stan Minkinow: Bob Jones High School, Decatur.

Max Steinmetz: Rotary Club, Downtown Birmingham; Auburn University, Montgomery; University of Alabama School of Law; Clay-Chalkville High School; Montevallo High School; Shelton State Junior College, Tuscaloosa; Mountain Brook Junior High School; Sardis High School (BHEC office); Fultondale High School (BHEC office); Oak Mountain High School, Pelham; St. Francis Xavier School, Birmingham.

Deborah Layman: Redstone Arsenal, Huntsville.

Esther Levy: White Plains Middle School, Anniston; Social Security Administration, Birmingham; Mountain Brook Junior High School.

Denise Lewis: Welti Presbyterian Church, Cullman; Wetumpka Elementary School; Hunters Bend Elementary School, Franklin, TN; Shelton State Junior College, Tuscaloosa; Liberty Park Middle School, Birmingham; Cherokee Bend Elementary School, Birmingham.

Four students from Fultondale High School – Kynslee Cummings, Kayla Oden, Nicole Ridley, and DeAnna Talley – were so inspired by hearing Max Steinmetz that they built a model based on his experience in Auschwitz. This was not an assignment, and the students received no credit for their work. The students presented the model to their teacher, Chris Campbell (*member BHEC Teacher Cadre and former BHEC scholarship recipient*) and wanted it donated to the BHEC for display.



Max Steinmetz
with Auschwitz model

If you are interested in bringing a speaker to your school or organization, please go to the BHEC Website and complete a Speaker Request Form.

Ben Benninga's Story of Survival

Ann Mollengarden, VP

In May, our community was given an extraordinary gift, the gift of a story: a Holocaust story never before told in public; a story that will most likely never be told again. It was the story of Ben Benninga's fight for survival as a hidden child in The Netherlands during Nazi occupation.

Ben is the cousin of Birmingham's Henry Frohsin. Knowing Ben was visiting Birmingham, Henry and his wife Carolyn wanted to provide a welcoming forum for Ben to publicly tell his story for the first time. With the help of Leslie West at the Homewood Public Library, an audience of over 300 adults and students welcomed Ben and were forever changed by the story they heard.

As with each uniquely personal story, once you hear a survivor's story, YOU become a witness. And with that, YOU become a messenger for the future. Every story is different and amazing in its own right. Each leaves you with more questions than answers and the desire to understand. But, as Holocaust survivor Primo Levi once said, "The Holocaust cannot be explained, because to 'understand' is to 'justify.'"

The recording of Ben Benninga's testimony is available on the BHEC website.



Ben Benninga
with student

I hope Mr. Benninga knows his story will be forever in the hearts of all that heard his sad, but courageous story. His story also testifies to the remarkable comeback of those trodden down and of the significant contributions his lineage has provided to our world. The world will never know what contributions to society we are missing as a result of the deaths of the millions of Holocaust victims.

Friedman Scholarship Recipients to be Honored

Ann Mollengarden, VP

Friedman Scholarship Recipients To Be Honored

A reception honoring the 2015 Friedman Scholarship recipients will be held at the BHEC office on Sunday, August 9 at 2:30 pm. Teachers from throughout the state are selected annually for these scholarships after a thorough application process. This year's recipients are:

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous Advanced Seminar

Amy McDonald, Shades Valley High School, Birmingham
Kate Gholston, Opelika Middle School, Opelika

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous European Study Program

Amy McDonald, Shades Valley High School, Birmingham

Jewish Foundation for the Righteous Lerner Fellowship Program

Mike Gadilhe, John Carroll High School, Birmingham
Farrah Hayes, Sardis High School, Sardis City

U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum Belfer Conference

Melody Campbell, Sparkman Middle School, Toney
Karen Coleman, Horseshoe Bend School, New Site
Rachel Hartsell, St. Francis Xavier Catholic School, Birmingham
Dominique Linchet, Alabama School of Fine Arts, Birmingham
Brittany Watters, Anniston High School, Anniston
Darby Wesson, Homewood Middle School, Birmingham

Jan Karski Institute for Holocaust Education

Ken Wiggins, Ranburne High School, Ranburne

This is one of our most rewarding programs of our year, as we share in the newly invigorated enthusiasm of our teachers and discover the impact of their training. If you are interested in attending, please contact the BHEC office at 205.795.4176 or info@bhamholocausteducation.org

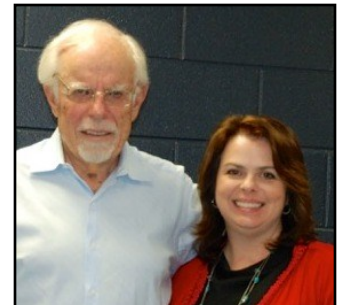
Inspired to Document the History

Robin Dauma, Bob Jones High School, Madison

Fifteen years ago, my life was forever changed when I met Stan Minkinow. His granddaughter, Anna, was a student in my middle school gifted program and during our unit on the Holocaust, she told me about her grandfather and asked if I wanted him to come speak to the class. I enthusiastically replied, "Yes, of course!" and soon after that, Stan walked into my classroom and my life. My students were mesmerized by his story, his demeanor, and his twinkling grin. Even in his 70s (at the time), he was full of energy, and although it seems unlikely, he was somehow able to relate some of his story of living in and subsequently escaping the Lodz and Warsaw Ghettos in a humorous way.

As the years went by, other students interviewed Stan for projects, yet he was sometimes hesitant to speak in front of large groups of students. He developed Parkinson's disease, and those symptoms, along with other conflicts, limited the interactions my students and I had with Stan for several years. After receiving a Friedman Scholarship from the BHEC to attend the JFR Institute in 2014, I returned home with a renewed vigor to bring more authentic and meaningful learning experiences to my students. Since first meeting Stan, I had moved to Bob Jones High School, where I teach Honors and AP English to juniors, with both courses including a unit based on Elie Wiesel's memoir, *Night*. I contacted Stan to see if he was willing and able to come speak to my students, and he was. After the two-hour visit, which was documented by two local television stations here in Huntsville, one of the reporters stayed to talk to Stan a bit longer, asking him some questions which my students had not had a chance to ask. As I sat and listened to Stan's eloquent and thought-provoking answers, I was struck with the nagging sense that I needed to do something beyond just inviting him to my school. I thought about this for weeks, and when he returned to talk to my spring students, I asked him over lunch if I could have the honor of writing his story with the end goal to produce his biography in book form. To my delight, he agreed!

I am in the process of gathering information about Stan's experiences from the BHEC, from members of the Minkinow family, and of course from Stan himself. At 84, he still goes to work every day at the business he founded in 1978 here in Huntsville, Alexander's Jewelry, so our interview sessions often occur in his office there, amidst photos depicting Stan's illustrious military career or him posing with astronauts or dignitaries. Concurrently, I am doing research on the ghettos themselves, as well as the community of Rodasc, outside Warsaw, where Stan and his mother lived, with falsified papers, after escaping the Warsaw Ghetto. I am honored to have the privilege of documenting Stan's story in detail and in such a way that will show the depth of courage, wisdom, and honor with which he has lived.



Stan Minkinow and
Robin Dauma



Amy McDonald with Dachau Archivists

Amy McDonald, Shades Valley High School, Birmingham

I had the opportunity to visit Dachau three years ago on the JFRs European Study Program to Germany and Poland. But being back this time was different. Not only was I at a historical site and a place of remembrance, I was there for a specific purpose. I was there to collect information for my friend, Holocaust survivor, Max Steinmetz. It was especially meaningful to be able to talk with archivists at Dachau and watch as they pulled up information on the time Max and his brother, Heinrich, spent in subcamps of Dachau.

Yom HaShoah and Our Community

Christa Lidikay, BHEC Board

While we were pursuing the American Dream during the week of April 16, an inspiring event was taking place throughout our community.

During that week, we attended board meetings, made sales calls, taught classes, attended classes, washed laundry, walked our dogs, fed our families, exercised, rested, mowed our lawns, and attended religious services. And while we were doing these things that occupy our time and our lives, we also took a moment to REMEMBER.

We remembered. We read names. We prayed for families lost. We taught our children the importance to never forget and always remember. We remembered by joining the worldwide Holocaust memorial project called "Unto Every Person There is a Name". Now in its 26th consecutive year, this unique project is designed to perpetuate the memory of the Six Million individuals who perished in the Holocaust. This project allows participants the time to memorialize them not only as a collective group, but as individuals – one at a time – through the public recitation of their names on Yom Hashoah, Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day.

In our community, local synagogues, temples, churches, civic groups, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and colleges took part in reading the names of those lost to the horrors of the Holocaust.

Our community remembered **7,700 individuals** lost to the Holocaust. We read the name, place of death, and age of those who perished. We taught our children the importance of remembering. By speaking each individual's name, we recognized the value and unique identity of each person lost.

We at the BHEC are honored to be a part of this community we call home, Birmingham. We are honored to have the following organizations as our partner in this year's "Reading of the Names":

Alabama School of Fine Arts
Berry Middle School
Bob Jones High School, Huntsville
Briarwood Christian Junior High School
Brookwood Forest Elementary School
Canterbury United Methodist Church
Chabad of Alabama
Cherokee Bend Elementary School
Church Without Walls
Clay-Chalkville Middle School
Crestline Elementary School
First Presbyterian Church

Fultondale High School
Handley High School, Roanoke
Hewitt-Trussville High School
Highlands School
Holt High School, Tuscaloosa
Homewood Middle School
Horseshoe Bend School, New Site
Indian Springs School
JH Israel
JH Ranch
Kneseth Israel Congregation
Liberty Park Middle School
Moody Junior High School

Mountain Brook Elementary School
Mountain Brook High School
N.E. Miles Jewish Day School
Ranburne High School
Samford University
Sardis High School
Shades Valley High School
Spain Park High School
St. Thomas the Apostle Catholic Church
Temple Beth-El
Temple Emanu-El
Thompson High School

The Birmingham Community Yom HaShoah Commemoration was held at Temple Beth-El on April 12. The program, *Stories Remembered & Retold*, featured stories of deceased Holocaust survivors as told by their local descendants. Attendees heard the stories of Szymon Nagrodzki (Louise Abrams), Sarah Alice Herman (Michele Forman), Inge Jane Marx Kahn & Arlo F. Kahn (Leslie Kahn), Aisic Hirsch (Sheryl Perlstein), and Pauline Rachman Schuster (Esther Schuster). Included with these stories was a program adapted from "D'varim K'doshim – Through Our Survivors' Eyes," a service compiled and written by Rabbi Scott Hausman-Weiss and previously presented in Birmingham in 2005. Special thanks to BHEC Board Members Deborah Layman, Ann Mollengarden, and Rabbi Joseph Robinson for their work on the program; the combined choirs of Temple Emanu-El and Temple Beth-El as led by Cantor Jessica Roskin; and community partners BHEC, Temple Beth-El, Temple Emanu-El, Kneseth Israel Congregation, Levite Jewish Community Center, and the Birmingham Jewish Federation, who contributed to the underwriting of this event.

Alabama Holocaust Commission Days of Remembrance

On April 16, the Alabama Holocaust Commission presented their annual Yom HaShoah Gathering of Remembrance in the State Capitol's Old House Chamber in Montgomery. The program included presentations by AHC Chair Dr. Dan Puckett, Dr. Robert Lawson Bryan of First United Methodist Church, Shades Valley High School's Amy McDonald, and Reverend Robert S. Graetz. Rabbi Scott Kramer of Agudath Israel-Etz Ahayem told *The Last Story of the Wise Women of Alabama* as the keynote address and Holocaust survivor Max Herzog read the Shoah Kaddish. Governor Robert Bentley and State Representative David Faulkner presented proclamations and Faulkner later acknowledged the survivors in attendance from the House Chamber floor.



Holocaust Survivors with Representative David Faulkner

Education Update

Ann Mollengarden, VP

2015-2016 Teacher Cadre

The BHEC Teacher Cadre is designed to enhance teachers' knowledge of the Holocaust and its pedagogy as well as to provide a network for peer exchange. These "study/learning" sessions are scheduled four times during the school year. Teachers can join the Cadre online and actively attend sessions or simply be in touch via email. We also welcome interested learners who are not teachers.

Mark these dates and join us for the 2015-16 year:

- Tuesday, October 6, 5:00pm
- Tuesday, November 17, 5:00pm
- Thursday, January 28, 5:00pm
- Thursday, March 10, 5:00pm

BHEC to Partner with U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

The BHEC will be partnering with the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) to present four teacher workshops in the state. Members of the USHMM Regional Education Corps will share rationales, strategies, and approaches for teaching about the Holocaust. These full-day professional development workshops will be free of charge for teachers and will include books and resources from the USHMM. Funding for substitute teachers will be available.

Monday, November 2, University of West Alabama/Livingston
 Tuesday, November 3, Troy University/Troy
 Monday, January 11, University of Alabama/Huntsville
 Tuesday, January 12, Samford University/Birmingham

Planning and funding for these workshops will be provided by the BHEC with assistance from the Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC). We are proud to also be partnering with Troy University, University of West Alabama in Livingston, Samford University in Birmingham, and University of Alabama at Huntsville in bringing these opportunities to our state.

BHEC Internship Program

Rebecca Dobrinski, Program Director

This summer, the BHEC kicked off our new internship program. For the summer semester, two college students worked on research and video projects relating to Holocaust survivors. One local student is researching, writing, and preparing a presentation on Dora Nesselroth. The student's research includes not only Dora's story, but contextualizes her experiences with what was happening in the world during her life. As part of the program, BHEC interns will give presentations on their research later this year. Our other intern is working on a video project editing recent interviews with survivor Riva Hirsch.

A sincere thank you to our inaugural class of interns: Ellie Goldfarb, an undergraduate in History at Dickenson College and Melissa Young, a PhD candidate in History at the University of Alabama.

We already plan to welcome another intern this fall and have space for additional interns. Our internship program runs year-round. Contact Rebecca Dobrinski at 205.795.4177 or rebecca@bhamholocausteducation.org for more information.

Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) Update

Dr. Dan Puckett, Chair

AHC Adds New Appointees

This year, eight new members began new terms with the Alabama Holocaust Commission. Governor Robert Bentley appointed Dr. Don Berry (Mobile), Paul DeMarco (Birmingham), Rabbi Scott Kramer (Montgomery), Dr. Barbara Minsky (Dothan), and Dr. Chris Shaffer (Enterprise). Rep. David Faulkner (Birmingham) and Senator Jabo Waggoner (Birmingham) also joined the Commission, appointed by House Speaker Mike Hubbard and Senate Majority Leader Del Marsh respectively. Max Rosenthal (Huntsville) joined the Alabama Holocaust Foundation with an appointment by Attorney General Luther Strange.

Association of Holocaust Organizations (AHO) Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NV, June 13-16, 2015

The 39th Annual Conference of the AHO met in conjunction with the Generations of the Shoah International. Alabama was well represented by Ann Mollengarden of the BHEC, Don Berry of the Gulf Coast Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education, and Dan Puckett from the Alabama Holocaust Commission. Conference sessions addressed such items as developing teacher communities, creating and managing traveling exhibits, and developing partnerships among Holocaust centers and organizations. The theme of this year's meeting was Media and Holocaust. Numerous sessions were devoted to how the Holocaust has been portrayed, and manipulated, by the media through the years and how Holocaust organizations such as the AHC, BHEC, and GCCHRE can use media to improve their outreach to students, teachers, and the general public. The most riveting presentation was from Dr. Michael Berenbaum, who spoke at length about the increasing antisemitism in Europe and the frequent invocation of the Holocaust by the media. He reminded the audience that while the growth of antisemitism in Europe is a very serious situation, "it is not 1933, 1938, or 1942" and the Jews of Europe have resources today that did not exist during the Holocaust. Overall, the conference was a great success.

Holocaust Studies Library at the BHEC

Rebecca Dobrinski, Program Director

In the last issue of *Legacy*, we introduced our new librarian, Mark Skinner, and told you about a generous donation of books from a private collector in Washington, DC. We are excited to report that the library renovations are on track!

We have inventoried the 1,298 books from the recent donation and are working on converting the library to the more researcher-friendly Library of Congress cataloging system. This spring, the Azrieli Foundation, publisher of Holocaust survivor biographies and memoirs, donated their entire catalogue of 30 memoirs to our library. We continue to receive donations of books through our Amazon wish list and from community members. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our collection!

We found a few hidden gems in the new stacks of books. We have two volumes of speeches – one by Rudolf Hess and one by Adolf Hitler – that look to be pretty rare. After checking the WorldCat (a clearinghouse of over 73,000 library catalogs throughout the world), we will be the 13th and 73rd library, respectively, in the world to carry these titles. The new library will feature a rare books section and a foreign language section that contains titles in German, French, and Italian.

We would like to give a special thanks to the Birmingham Jewish Foundation for a grant enabling us to purchase supplies for the library and to the ninth graders of Temple Beth-El who visited the BHEC office as a service project to help us move books and prepare the office for painting. BHEC summer intern Melissa Young has spent many hours working with Mark on this project as well. Melissa also inventoried our Archives holdings and is working with us to organize our archival space. We are always accepting donations to the BHEC archives.

Once our renovations are complete, we hope you will join us to celebrate the grand re-opening of the Holocaust Studies Library this fall.

Renewing My Admiration for the Power of the Human Spirit

Melissa Young, BHEC Summer Intern

When I began my studies as a PhD student at the University of Alabama, I was sure I would be focusing on Civil War research. My work generally concerned Union soldiers and the women they met in the South. Since I want to work in a museum, I often sought opportunities to intern in a public setting. I met Rebecca Dobrinski, the BHEC's program director, at a museum conference in February. When she suggested a summer internship at the BHEC, I was very excited. I began looking forward to researching a Holocaust survivor.

I was unaware, however, that my summer work would also make a significant impression upon me. My study of Dora Nesselroth's life has not only changed the focus of my dissertation, it has renewed my admiration for the power of the human spirit.

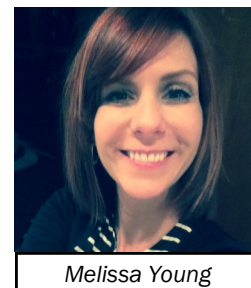
Dora's story begins in Skarzysko-Kamienna, Poland, in 1939, when she was a pretty 17-year-old girl recently graduated from a private high school. She had been accepted into dental school and planned to move to Warsaw in the fall. Unfortunately, the Nazis attacked Skarzysko in September. Her family was thrown into turmoil and sought refuge in the countryside.

When they returned, Nazis occupied the city. Since their home was located in what became the Skarzysko ghetto, they were allowed to remain in it. Like most survivors, Dora described ghetto life as horrible—she notes widespread starvation, terrible overcrowding, mass deportations, filth, abuse, and murder. She was forced to work in one of Hasag's many munitions factories and used her intellect, her sense of duty, and her social connections to survive.

What I find fascinating about Dora's story is the way she told it. Because I study language and gender, I admire her ability to use English – her second language – her struggles as a woman in terrible conditions, and the things she spoke of even though they were often difficult to remember. I also consider her ability to forgive remarkable. More often than not, she noted how individuals act differently when they are alone and by talking to them, one could come to understand how people thought and why they acted as they did. Her father, who died at Buchenwald, served as her "guiding spirit" as he always tried to help the less fortunate and told her people only behaved wrongly because of their ignorance or poor attitudes.

Although Dora passed away in 1998, the message of hope she embedded into her narrative continues. Her words have definitely changed my life. While I am training to become a historian, I have decided to study not only Dora, but other Jewish women who were forced to work in munitions plants. In a world that still contains so much hate and intolerance, the least I can do is try to convey their struggles and triumphs as well as they have.

Melissa will present her work this fall at a reception hosted at the BHEC office.



Melissa Young

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Laurie Elmets	Joyce Spielberger

Mission Statement

The mission of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) is to educate the people of Alabama about the history of the Holocaust so that new generations will apply the lessons of the Holocaust to the construction of a more just, humane, and tolerant future. By preserving and sharing the stories of local Holocaust survivors and commemorating the events of the Holocaust and the lives of those who perished, the BHEC seeks to promote a moral and ethical response to prejudice, hatred, and indifference for the benefit of all humanity.

Call for Volunteers

The BHEC has openings for several "time limited" volunteer activities. Join us by contacting :

Rebecca Dobrinski, Program Director
205-795-4177
bhecrebecca@gmail.com

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