



Legacy



A publication of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center, a division of the Alabama Holocaust Commission

Winter / Spring 2012

The Brenda and Fred Friedman Teacher Scholarship Program

DATES TO REMEMBER

(Further information on the BHEC website)

February 6–24

Darkness into Life
Birmingham-Southern College

Wednesdays in March, Noon

Brown Bag Lunch Series
Birmingham Public Library

March 18–June 10

Darkness into Life
Huntsville Museum of Art

April 17, 11:00 am

Alabama's Yom HaShoah
State Capitol, Montgomery

April 18, 7:00 pm

Birmingham's Yom HaShoah
Birmingham-Southern College



Teacher Scholarship Coordinator Laurie Elmets, Education Coordinator Ann Mollengarden, Brenda Friedman, and Fred Friedman.

We are thrilled to announce the establishment of the Brenda and Fred Friedman Teacher Scholarship Program which formalizes the funding they have provided for many years. Since the formation of the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) in 2002, Brenda and Fred have supported the training of 40 teachers from 33 different schools in the Birmingham area. These scholarships are available to middle and

high school teachers to attend nationally recognized Holocaust education programs like the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's Belfer Workshop, Facing History and Ourselves' Holocaust and Human Behavior Workshop, and the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous' Lerner Fellowship Program.

Applicants can apply online via the BHEC website. Scholarships are awarded annually in January. Teachers learn Holocaust pedagogy and history to enhance their current Holocaust curriculum. Trained teachers then become active members of the BHEC Teacher Cadre, sharing their expertise and becoming mentors for other teachers.

Holocaust education is the core of the BHEC mission. Through teacher training, we strengthen our ability to educate future generations about the history and lessons of the Holocaust. We are grateful to the Friedman's for providing us with the means to insure that our mission is secure for the future.

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Looking back on the 10 years of our existence, we are excited to see the progress that we have made and, hopefully, the impact we have made through our activity.

It all began in 2002 with five members gathered in the LJCC library, meeting regularly to chart our course. Along the way, interested individuals have contributed their time and passion, often determining new directions for

our group. We now have over 20 active, interested, and motivated volunteers who continue to move our program forward.

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Teacher Workshops Held in Alabama

Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator

The Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) and the Birmingham Holocaust Education Center (BHEC) embarked on their second, state-wide teacher education program during the last week of October and the first week of November, 2011. Full-day workshops were held in Birmingham, Florence, Montgomery, and Bay Minette, with almost 250 teachers attending.

Facilitators from the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) presented the Holocaust curriculum, *Echoes and Reflections, A Multi-Media Curriculum on the Holocaust*. This award-winning curriculum created by the ADL, Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem is currently used by over 14,000 educators. It incorporates compelling visual history testimony to engage students in the lives of survivors, rescuers, and liberators. As well, it promotes contemporary connections to cultural diversity, intolerance, and genocide.

The ADL generously provided the funding for the facilitators, as well as the curriculum for participating teachers—a \$100 value. The AHC/BHEC provided funding for workshop planning and completion, snacks/lunches, and most importantly, substitute teacher reimbursement to the schools. Our total budget was just over \$17,000.

The teacher comments said it all:

- “Amazing, informative, beneficial.” (Bay Minette)
- “I thought the workshop was well-organized and informative. I will find this material useful in my classroom. I would love additional training.” (Florence)
- “This was one of the best in-services I have attended in Birmingham. I highly recommend it.” (Birmingham)
- “I think this program's knowledge is pertinent in so many areas: social interaction and personal responsibility as well as Social Studies and English curricula.” (Florence)



“Echoes and Reflections, A Multi-Media Curriculum on the Holocaust”, was presented in Birmingham, Florence, Montgomery, and Bay Minette, 2011 in October and November.

And in an email received after the workshops:

I began our "Echoes and Reflections" classes with my gifted class today in honor of *Kristallnacht*. As one of my kids left the room today, he told me that he felt he learned more in one class period than he had all week. Thank you again for letting me attend your program. (Hanceville)

The ADL was so pleased with the organization and response in Alabama that they are requesting two additional Alabama workshops in 2012. We are currently researching locations and funding resources for these ventures.

In our effort to keep the history and lessons of the Holocaust alive, we hope to offer another statewide workshop in 2013.

BHEC at 10 Years (continued)

Chair Phyllis Weinstein

During these years, we have partnered locally with the Birmingham Jewish Federation/Foundation, the Levite Jewish Community Center, Temple Emanu-El, Temple Beth-El, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, the Birmingham Museum of Art, the Birmingham Public Library, Samford University, Birmingham-Southern, University of Montevallo, and Jacksonville State University. And, of course, we are grateful to Bayer Properties for providing us with a permanent home.

As we have grown, we have been able to provide resources for much of the state and beyond. Our *Darkness into Life* exhibit continues to travel throughout Alabama, bringing us wide acclaim for its depiction of the lives and triumphs of Birmingham and state Holocaust survivors. We have conducted teacher workshops locally and state-wide, bringing experts in the field of Holocaust education to our state.

All of this would not have been possible without our dedicated volunteers, as well as our generous supporters.

As we look forward to the next ten years, we recognize the need to take new directions—that of remembrance as well as education. To that end, we are developing programs that will address those issues. We are dedicated to strengthening Holocaust education in our state; keeping the history and lessons of the Holocaust alive for future generations.

May it be so.

Darkness Life

Alabama Holocaust Survivors Through Photography and Art

Darkness into Life: Survivor Regina Dembo



Saying Goodbye by Mitzi J. Levin

As the train moved slowly away, Regina Dembo and her two sisters waved until the train station was a blur. It would be the last time they saw their mother and four-year-old brother, Erwin.

"It was August 1939, and I was only 12," Regina recalls. "Mother had taken us to the train station in Vienna, Austria. She pleaded with people standing in line, 'Please watch out for them.' But no one paid any attention to us at all. We didn't want to leave without our mother and little brother. Erwin stayed in Austria with Mother because she felt we were too young to take care of him. Of course, I questioned if I would be able to take care of myself and my younger sisters. Even though we were on our way to safety in America, I felt very frightened and alone."

Regina's mother was unable to leave Austria because she was born in Poland and could not obtain a visa. Since the children were born in Vienna, they qualified for the Austrian quota.

As the number of people fleeing persecution increased, more countries refused to accept those leaving Europe, and by 1939, the number of havens available dwindled. Switzerland feared that massive numbers of Jews would cross their borders, and the British government continued

to restrict Jewish immigration to Palestine. By 1940, emigration from Nazi Germany became virtually impossible, and in October 1941, it was officially forbidden by the German government.

Just before Regina left Austria, the Nazis arrested her father and seized the family's business and apartment. He was eventually released on the condition that he leave Austria. He returned to his native Poland where his family spoke with him twice and then never heard from him again.

"It was a horrendous time," Regina says. "We never thought our separation would be permanent, but three years later, we found out Mother and Erwin had been gassed."

The girls were met in New York City by a young bachelor uncle who soon discovered he could not take care of the three new additions to his household. They were sent to Pleasantville Cottage School in Pleasantville, New York, and then to foster homes.

As she grew into a young woman, Regina developed a love for learning and for teaching. Perhaps it was an antisemitic teacher in Austria who told Regina she was stupid, or it could have been her foster family who encouraged her to go to college which led her to teach elementary school for 23 years. It was a career spent with children the age of her young sisters as they escaped Austria.

"I lost so much in the Holocaust: my mother, father, and brother," Regina says. "One of the hardest things throughout my life has been to do something well and not be able to share it with them."



Teacher by Becky Seitel



The Exhibit that Just Keeps on Keeping On

Barbara Solomon, Exhibit Coordinator

Our traveling exhibit just keeps on keeping on and continues to bring us to greater and greater heights in our quest to provide Holocaust education throughout Alabama.

Becky Seitel and Mitzi J. Levin created *Darkness into Life* which debuted in 2007 and was expanded in 2008. The exhibit is an artistic rendering of the stories of 20 Alabamians who survived the atrocities of the Holocaust. The paintings and photographs teach us about personal fortitude and inconceivable courage.

The exhibit allows the BHEC the opportunity to enter communities that may not have had exposure to Holocaust education. We have learned that as the stories unfold, the communities embrace the exhibit as a tool to create programming and community involvement.

***Darkness into Life* Continues to Move About**

Packed in six, heavy, wooden crates, each weighing more than 200 pounds, the exhibit is a challenge to move and keep intact and relatively damage free during shipment. Each year, funds are spent to ship the exhibit to educational institutions (other venues pay for shipping) and to maintain it in good repair.

Since our last *Legacy*, the exhibit traveled to Hoover High School and the Florence–Lauderdale Library in Florence. Experiences at both venues have been spectacular.

Hoover High School: A Stunning Experience—The media room was the site for the exhibit which was creatively displayed on mid-height bookshelves. Two large screens displayed the introductory video created by our Montevallo venue and a video of interviews with some of our survivors. Hoover High stunned us with their efforts. Faculty members

met with Education Coordinator Ann Mollengarden before the exhibit arrived. With her help, they selected a Holocaust-themed book, *All But My Life* by Gerda Weissman Klein, for their summer reading program. This helped to prepare the students for the curriculum that would teach the Holocaust. They requested, and Ann obliged, a professional development day to learn about teaching Holocaust material, and how they could incorporate it into their curriculum. Additionally, Student Ambassadors were trained by Ann and exhibit creator Becky Seitel to act as docents. Including the student population of 2,275, a total of 2,639 viewed the exhibit. All were led through the exhibit by the docents. We talked with some of the docents, and they were very impressive with their newly-gained knowledge, their sensitivity to the subject, and how they felt the exhibit would impact them as they move forward in their lives.

Additional events and activities were also part of the exhibit's visit:

- TV crews interviewed students and visitors on several occasions, and *The Birmingham News* printed an article about the exhibit.
- Students wrote monologues based on Holocaust material and then created powerful, one-act plays which they presented to the student body.
- Student Ambassadors were treated to a special meeting with one of our survivors, Ilse Nathan. Her words were so profound that the students lingered long past the scheduled time, talking with her, asking questions, trying to wrap their heads around the topic.
- Max Steinmetz met with a special group of donors who were inspired to make a very generous donation to the BHEC in his honor. Hoover High agreed to host the program, which was organized by John McGill, a broker with the Mountain Brook office of Realty South. Before Max's presentation, the Hoover Ambassadors were on hand to guide these special visitors through the exhibit.

On to Florence, Alabama—The exhibit moved straight on to Florence where it has been displayed in the Florence—Lauderdale Public Library. The Library has an extensive Judaic book selection which was donated by a local family. Max Herzel, one of the survivors featured in *Darkness into Life*, spoke to an audience of almost 100 who came to hear him and view the exhibit.

As I recently talked with Library Director Nancy Sanford, I learned that this was the first time the library has hosted an exhibit. She relayed that the positive experience has led them to investigate other exhibits they might bring to their facility.



Hoover High School Docents provided tours of "Darkness into Life".

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Raising Funds to Keep the Stories and Lessons Alive

Deborah Layman, Fundraising Co-Chair

In the Spring of 2011, the BHEC launched a multi-faceted fundraising campaign including:

An Evening at the David Kimerlings—This special event was cancelled due to the April tornadoes, but many generous donations were received from invitees.

Phone Campaign—During the summer, BHEC volunteers called members of the Jewish community requesting donations, and the community responded generously.

L'Chaim Dinner Event—In August, the BHEC presented a fundraising dinner event celebrating the lives and legacies of our Holocaust survivors. In addition to donations from attendees, corporate sponsorships were received from Sirote & Permutt and Protective Life.

From these efforts, the BHEC raised \$26,000 to help advance the programs and initiatives of the BHEC, but more funds are needed. In addition to special projects, including the editing of survivor videos for classroom/website use and the creation of a lightweight, traveling version of the *Darkness into Life* exhibit, the ongoing work of the BHEC requires ongoing funding, and so our efforts continue. In 2012, we are applying for grants for special projects and will continue to reach out to the Birmingham community for support so that the history and lessons of the Holocaust will remain alive in Alabama.

BHEC Website Continues to Evolve

Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator

If you don't check out the BHEC website on a regular basis, you have missed the ever-evolving wealth of information that we are adding. In addition to our time-sensitive updates, we are continually adding to the "Weblinks" for teachers/students and have recently added a new page entitled "Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust."

There are several new projects that will soon be available online (if they aren't already there by press time). The first is our "Library" page which will offer the ability to search our media collection online. We are continuing to add our many donated items to our database. If you find a book you are interested in, come by our office to check it out. We welcome visitors during our regular office hours (Monday-Wednesday, 9:00 am–2:00 pm). And if you have Holocaust-related materials looking for a good home, we welcome your personal donations.

The second new project is our "Alabama Survivors" page. Although we currently feature 20 Holocaust survivors from the state in our *Darkness into Life* exhibit online, this page will feature additional information on these survivors and others in the state. We hope this page will be a one-stop resource for information on Alabama Holocaust survivors. Watch with us as it develops.

Looking for Holocaust memorials in Alabama? We are too! As soon as this information is gathered, these memorials and their history will be featured on a soon-to-be-created "Alabama Holocaust Memorials" page. If you know of a memorial that should be included, please see "Help us Locate Holocaust Memorials in Alabama" on page eight for more information.



"Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust", a new Teacher Resource, has been added to our website.



"Weblinks" section is continually updated; two new sections, "Library" and "Alabama Survivors", have been added to our home page.

Birmingham Public Library Brown Bag Lunch Series

Don't miss the Birmingham Public Library's Brown Bag Lunch Series in March when we will provide the following programs:

March 7—"Alabama and the Refugee Crisis, 1938-1941" presented by Dr. Dan Puckett, Associate Professor of History, Troy University. Dr. Puckett's book, *In the Shadow of Hitler: Alabama's Jews and the Holocaust*, is forthcoming. He will speak about how Alabama Jews organized at the state and local level to work for the rescue of Jews who remained in Nazi-dominated Europe.

March 14—"The Story of My Father, Judel Schuster, and His Jewish Community of Sarny, Poland" presented by Dr. Abraham Schuster, practicing physician in Birmingham since 1989. During their life time, Dr. Schuster's parents, Pauline and Judel Schuster, did not speak of their experiences in

their native land. Their children documented their gripping story which he will share with us.

March 21—"A Holocaust Survivor Speaks" presented by Survivor Riva Hirsch. Riva was seven years old when the Germans occupied her village in Bessarabia. She was arrested and sent to several work camps. She was rescued by partisan troops and taken to a convent in Tulchin where she was cared for by nuns and hidden in a bunker from 1943-1945.

March 28—*In the Garden of Beasts* by Erik Larson presented by Dr. Natalie Davis, Professor of Political Science and Pre-Law Advisor, Birmingham-Southern College. Dr. Davis will review this highly-researched, non-fiction work which covers the years that William E. Dodd served as U.S. Ambassador to Germany during 1933-1937.

Hecht Menorah Donated to our Archives

Phyllis Weinstein, Chair



Hecht Menorah

"And I will give unto them a monument and a name, that shall not be cut off. " Isaiah 56:5

This inscription can be found on the unique six-armed, Holocaust menorah which was donated to our Archives upon the closing of Congregation Beth Israel of Gadsden. The menorah was originally given to that congregation by the Hugo Hecht Lodge of B'nai B'rith, "In memory of the six million Jews whom the Nazis destroyed."

In 1908, the first services for Beth Israel families were held at 109 N. 4th Street in a room over the old Gadsden National Bank. Young immigrant Hugo Henry Hecht acted as "lay-religious-leader" of the synagogue from 1911 to 1944. Hugo was born on February 21, 1880, in Floss, Germany and was a dedicated and spiritual man, well-versed in the bible and Hebrew. He conducted Shabbat and funeral services, wrote sermons, taught the Sunday school, and acted as secretary and treasurer. During his lifetime, Hugo was also the mainstay of the local B'nai B'rith Lodge. He died May 29, 1957.

If you can provide further information regarding our newest Archive treasure, please contact our office at 205-795-1476.

AHC Sends Teachers to JFR Advanced Seminar

Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator

The Alabama Holocaust Commission (AHC) is designated a "Center of Excellence" by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR). The Holocaust Centers of Excellence Program is a partnership between the JFR and the participating Holocaust Center. In agreeing to participate in the program, each Center agrees to nominate two educators each year to attend the Summer Institute for Teachers. Each Center also agrees to sponsor Holocaust teacher education programs that draw on JFR materials and training modules. The Centers make a commitment to teach the Holocaust in as comprehensive a manner as possible and to include the subject of rescue. Teachers who attend JFR programs are known as Alfred Lerner Fellows and form a cadre of educators for each local Center as well as for the JFR. The JFR's education programs are comprehensive and far-reaching. They include not only the summer residential program but an advanced seminar, and educators' trip to Germany and Poland, an academic newsletter, a teachers' Internet resource, and partnerships with Holocaust Centers throughout the country.

In January 2012, Amy McDonald (Shades Valley High School, Birmingham) and Ken Wiggins (Ranburne High School, Ranburne) will attend the JFR Advanced Seminar. Education Coordinator Ann Mollengarden will also attend. Participants will have extensive reading assignments from the visiting scholars that include: Debórah Dwork, Christopher Browning, Samuel Kassow, and Robert Jan van Pelt.

We look forward to learning from our own scholars when they return.

The Traveling Exhibit that Just Keeps on Keeping On (continued)

Barbara Solomon, Exhibit Coordinator

Where to Next?

Darkness into Life began 2012 by traveling to Phillips High School in Bear Creek, a rural northwest Alabama community. We are very excited about this venue and have enjoyed helping them provide Holocaust education through the exhibit. Faculty attended our “Echoes and Reflections” workshop and also visited Hoover High to and get display ideas. They were so impressed with the role that the student body played in acting as docents that they brought a group of students to the BHEC offices for training so that they, too, could function as student/docents.

Next, the exhibit will be traveling to Birmingham-Southern College and then to the Huntsville Museum of Art. Both venues have planned extensive programming around the exhibit.

So Much to Tell

Exciting things are happening at the BHEC, and we continue to be inspired and invigorated by community response. Contact us to see how your community can reserve this inspirational learning experience. We can be reached at www.bhamholocausteducation.org, by contacting Barbara Solomon at Bsolo1msw@gmail.com or 205-422-3584, or by calling our office at 205-795-4176.

Guardians of Remembrance: Continuing to Tell Their Stories

Denise Lewis, Speaker Coordinator

The BHEC strives to fill requests for our local Holocaust survivors to share their stories. We also have Second Generation speakers who tell their own family's survival with stories that were passed down from their parents and/or grandparents. Requests have been received from many local schools, churches, and civic groups and we have also filled requests in other cities around our state via Skype. Our speakers do a remarkable job in telling about their lives—before, during, and after the Holocaust. Feedback from these groups is wonderful. Children in schools who hear these stories seem to understand that this historical event did take place, and they can “see” and “hear” from real people and experience “living history.”

Many thanks to our local Holocaust survivors who are willing to share their stories: Martin Aaron, Max Herzel, Riva and Aisic Hirsch, and Max Steinmetz. In the last several months, they shared as follows:

- Riva and Aisic Hirsch spoke to Erwin Middle School, Montevallo Middle School, Haleyville High School, Zamora Temple, St. Martin in the Pines, and Homewood Kiwanis.
- Max Steinmetz shared his story with Oakmont Presbyterian Church, Hoover High School, and a Montgomery teacher workshop.
- Max Herzel spoke to Kingswood Christian School, Liberty Park Middle School, Positive Maturity-Bham Chapter, a teacher workshop in Florence, and the Florence Library.
- Martin Aaron shared his story with a Birmingham teacher workshop and Phillips High School students from Bear Creek.

Future speaking dates include AUM-Montgomery, Birmingham-Southern College, Huntsville Museum of Art, Oak Mountain High School, Duran Jr. High School-Pell City, Vinemont School-Vinemont, Haleyville High School, and Jacksonville State University.

For more information, please send a request from the “Speakers Bureau” link on our website home page.



Holocaust survivors Riva and Aisic Hirsch (center) with juniors at Leeds High School.

Alabama Holocaust Foundation
Birmingham Holocaust Education Center

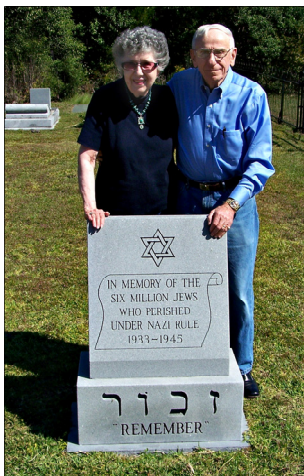
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Deborah Layman	Lemarse Washington
Mitzi J. Levin	Dr. Steven Whitton
Eva Wilensky	

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

Help us Locate Holocaust Memorials in Alabama



Mary Louise and Bert Rosenbush

The BHEC is trying to locate and document all Holocaust memorials in Alabama. We are aware of a memorial outside Temple Emanu-El in Birmingham and the memorial on the left in Demopolis donated by Mary Louise and Bert Rosenbush.

Do you know of other memorials in our state? If so, please provide:

- high-resolution digital photo;
- physical location/address;
- dedication date and by whom; and
- other pertinent details you might have.

Please email the photography and information to: Ann Mollengarden, Education Coordinator
Birmingham Holocaust Education Center and Alabama Holocaust Commission,
education@bhamholocausteducation.org

As soon as this information is gathered, these memorials and their history will be featured on a soon-to-be-completed "Alabama Holocaust Memorials" page on our website.

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Sign up on line at www.bhamholocausteducation.org. In the right column of the home page, click "Sign Up Now" and follow the prompts.