

Midwest Holocaust Educator Consortium
June 10-12, 2014
LaCrosse, Wisconsin

Tuesday, June 10th

The Midwest Holocaust Educator Consortium met, after missing our 2013 gathering, at the home of our illustrious leader, Darryle Clott. Darryle and Marv opened their home for us to again gather and rekindle our friendships. Marvelous Marv manned the grill and then put on his Admiral's hat to host sunset cruises on the Mississippi River.



Wednesday, June 11, 2014



We met in the Emmaus Conference Room of the Franciscan Spirituality Center, which has become our home base for the consortium. Darryle welcomed us, shared logistical information, and reminded us of the importance of the evaluation to her as she plans for next year--June 9-11, 2015. Additionally, she told us about the publication of *Denying the Deniers*, WWII liberator John Regnier's story written by Susan Hessel and shared a copy. It is available through Amazon.

A special welcome was extended to new members Teri Dobbs, Terry Hurd and guest Sonja Larson. Introductions from other members followed: Chris Anderson, Ellen Bisping, Lolle Boettcher, Dana Humphrey, Brian Hurd, GiGi Lincoln, Mary Munson Murphy, Dave Nelson, Tim Scott, Elizabeth van Pilsum, Greg Wegner, Bill Younglove and Rabbi Simcha Prombaum.

Greg Wegner



Dr. Wegner gave a plenary session, "Revisiting the Challenge of the Shoah: The Legacy of Hitler Youth." He opened by posing a curriculum question to us: We are all faced with scarcity of time to teach any topic, especially the Holocaust, so why teach about the Hitler Youth? Several members gave answers to the question and Greg replied these were all rationales for teaching the Hitler Youth. He went on to say that the Hitler Youth became very important to the Nazis and lots of time and money were spent on the program.

Propaganda played a prominent role in establishing and maintaining the Hitler Youth. The propaganda helped answer questions like how does one define a Nazi and what makes a good Nazi? Greg shared a primary source document, a graphic showing interlocking gears in the background (representing the racial community working in lock step as a collective community) for males and females "from cradle to grave." It showed the stages of involvement and group names for the boys and girls starting at age 6.

What did Hitler expect from the Hitler Youth and what kind of youth did he hope to groom for the Riech? : "I want young men and women who can suffer pain. A young German must be as swift as a greyhound, as tough as leather, and as hard as Krupp's steel."

We watched a film clip from *Triumph of the Will*, which many say is one of most important propaganda films of all time. (The clip can be accessed at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3C9iUaP51CI>)

Greg asked us to watch it and look for two things (responses after viewing listed below questions):

1. What techniques are used to persuade viewers of the rightness of Hitler's cause?
 2. What is the content the filmmaker trying to share?
- Hitler larger than life, occupies entire screen
 - cut-aways of the masses and individuals—individuals were always strong Aryan
 - like a father talking to his children
 - words were inherently good, no negative words—sacrifice, honor, unity and action and strength
 - empowering the youth through words
 - a calling to be a part of the greater good

We also looked at other examples of the propaganda used to further the Nazi ideology—posters and photos of Hitler with children—he liked to be seen with children. Also a photo of youth in front of a memorial to/for the Hitler Youth that said “We are Born to Die for Germany.”

Greg also said that physical education was an extremely important subject in the Nazi controlled school curriculum; no other country has ever spent so much time on PE as the Nazis.



And then, we had the honor of meeting Fritz Kesselring. Fritz is 82 and lives in LaCrosse. He was 14 when WWII ended and was a member of the Hitler Youth. Fritz has never spoken about his experiences before. Fritz sat at the table with us as he talked about his experience:

He was born in 1931, in Hanover, Germany and lived there until October 1943 when the city was bombed and destroyed and everyone was evacuated. His father (a WWI veteran) and older brother were drafted into the army so he and his mother were alone in Hanover. After the bombing, the remaining women and children were relocated to a small village outside Hanover.

The relocation was very organized (by the Nazis). They were taken by bus to the village where people were waiting to take the evacuees into their homes. Fritz and his mother had one room in a home. They pretty much stayed in that room, ate there as well using the small stove in the room; they didn't “join” the other family although the family did help Fritz and his mother get started in their new “home.” They literally only took with them what they had on them when the bombing started and they headed to the bunker for protection. They lost everything in the bombing, including family photographs.

He said it was a must to join the Hitler Youth. Things were much different then, no TV, no phones, etc. American was far away and all they had was radio, which was controlled by the government and its propaganda. The Hitler Youth gave them something to do, it was “fun.” He had a uniform of black corduroy pants, a brown shirt and black tie. He had a pocketknife and remembers meeting every Saturday and on Wednesdays. He said he remembers singing and marching and class work with the Hitler Youth. He said all the propaganda sounded good to the Germans at the time, Hitler and the Nazis were seen as “good.”

We also learned the following based on questions to Fritz:

- he did not have a weapon or doesn't remember any weapon training
- he was not upset that Germany lost war, most were glad the war was over; when saw the tanks and soldiers entering the town he remembers standing on the street and waving to them
- he had never seen any other flag than the Nazi flag

When asked if he remembered any anti-Semitism present, he responded that he knew there were Jews in Hanover, that they had business in the city, they looked and dressed different. He remembers once when Nazis

came in and tore everything out of the stores and had a bonfire in the middle of the street, burning everything they took from the stores. He knew they (Jews) were a different religion than he--different that's all.

He remembers questions on paperwork for school enrollment asking if he had any relatives that were Jews. When he learned about everything that occurred during the war he remembers thinking how can that happen—most Germans didn't know about the camps—they kept it secret.

Margaret “GiGi” Lincoln



GiGi's session was a continuation, another layer, of the work she has been doing for several years with artist and Holocaust survivor Miriam Brisk. She briefly described the work that has been done around Miriam's work in books, exhibits and lesson plans to accompany the art.

GiGi then asked us to review a student guide based on Miriam's third exhibit, *Scroll of Remembrance*. The guide was created to help focus students as they view the 13-panel exhibit on the destruction of entire Jewish communities. As students enter the exhibit, they receive an “Identity Card” which contains the student guide to the exhibit. The guide contains questions to help students reflect and focus on each panel. Once the reflection is completed, students take their “card” to a docent where it is stamped to indicate completion.

We received identity cards, and copies of the art and accompanying text for each panel. We reviewed the student guide and the questions and commented on the appropriateness of the questions in relationship to the art and panel. Groups worked on sections of the guide and provided feedback in the individual student guides.

General consensus of the consortium members was this activity was appropriate and effective. It brought the history and art together and holds students accountable for participating in the exhibit. A concern was mentioned about the appropriateness of the “I.D. Card” and “stamp,” wondering if it was bordering on simulation.

Brian and Terry Hurd shared an approach for history and language arts teachers to collaborate while teaching the Holocaust across the two curricular areas. Using Brian's eBook, *The Shoah: 101 Keys to Understanding the Holocaust* and the novel, *Friedrich*, they shared how to integrate the historical background with the events of the novel.

Terry had us read the section from the novel, *The Way to School*. In this section the boys witness an old woman refusing to participate in a boycott of Jewish businesses. Then, to give some background to the fiction, we read about the Nazi sponsored Jewish boycott in the eBook.



We then discussed some typical questions language arts teachers would ask after reading the section from the novel, typical questions a history teacher would ask after reading the portion of the eBook, and then what questions would we ask after reading both. It was evident that the questions based on both readings were deeper, more thoughtful questions that required not only knowledge of the history, but of individual actions. One such question offered was, *What if there had been more people like the woman in the story?*

Brian and Terry have written a complete study guide integrating the two books and it can be accessed from Brian's web page: <http://brianhurd.us/curriculum-resources/>

During lunch, **Darryle, Lolle** and **Dana** shared a brief photo show documenting their Holocaust sites trip last summer with Cor Suijk last summer. Ellen Bisping and Bill Younglove have also traveled with Cor. It was a special trip for the three of us and we were sad to hear of Cor's death on June 4th.



After lunch, **Dana Humphrey** asked participants to help vet resources to make sure they are not only effective resources for teaching Common Core State Standards, but also representative of sound Holocaust pedagogy. She briefly shared the resources and the correlations to the standards and asked for suggestions and feedback.

Next, she asked participants to engage in activity designed to set the stage and gather information from participants in a teacher workshop the Missouri Holocaust and Education Commission is holding in July. Charts with quotes, photos, art, testimony, diary entries, etc. were posted around the room and participants were to record their reactions in the form of comments, questions, reflections.

Terry Hurd presented her work session on a topic that has been close to her heart for a long time. She felt this need to tell her story after seeing an image of Jewish prisoners after liberation gathered for prayer. She began by showing her family photograph—a large extended family whose roots started long before Columbus set foot on American soil.



The federal definition of “native” American is one who has ¼ native blood. This was a way to “get rid” of the population—eventually they would all die out. Even though this has not occurred, Terry asked us to consider the fact that our native population is invisible: where do you see them?

The book, *Is the Holocaust Unique?: Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, by Alan S Rosenbaum, states “the destruction must be named, lest it be forgotten.” Terry indicated that the silence of the native story has lead to “historical trauma”—the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations emanating from massive group trauma.

She asked: *What is actually taught about Native Americans in our schools? What do maps of exploration show?* Terry then said they do not teach what the Native Americans experienced: annihilation, extermination, assimilation and reservations.

Terry suggested that there are five questions we should ask about American History textbooks:

- Why was it written?
- Whose viewpoint is presented?
- Is the account believable?
- Is the account backed up by other sources?
- How is one supposed to feel about America? (what words and images are used?)

We watched a video clip of a Lakota woman describing the abuse she received in a "Christian" boarding school. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p1tiQB8gt5g>

After watching video, Terry asked if we thought our textbooks should be augmented to show the true story. She shared that she thinks it's time, as evidenced by Kevin Gover's apology for the actions of the Bureau of Indian in his address to the tribal leaders in 2000. In it he uses the phrase, “never again” eight times.

<http://jaie.asu.edu/v39/V39I2A1.pdf> (this link may need to be typed in your browser to work properly)

Is it time to name the destruction so it is not forgotten?



Teri Dobbs' presentation on trauma, music making and musical remembrance stems from her research on what making music meant to children who were imprisoned at Theresienstadt during the Shoah. Terri explained that she uses the term Shoah rather than Holocaust as much as she can because the author of *Remnants of Auschwitz* says Shoah has its roots in Hebrew, which means complete incineration. Holocaust comes from the Greek, meaning sacrificial offering, and there was nothing sacrificial about what happened to the Jews. It is a philosophical perspective, Shoah--catastrophe, Holocaust--complete incineration or sacrificial offering.

Through her research, she has been working with testimonies and has discovered that “Whatever form Holocaust testimonies may assume...they all inhabit a haunted terrain of traumatized memory.” In Prague she spend time researching Brundibar, or as she described it, *chasing* Brundibar!

Terri said that all too often Brundibar is shown without the historical background, the context of the story around it, etc. For example, when it was written, the cat was never intended to symbolize Hitler, but that is what most people think it symbolizes.

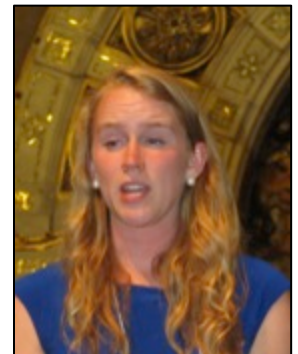
Brundibar, which was performed by the children in Theresienstadt, was free to attend but you had to have a ticket to enter. Terri interviewed a survivor who sang in the chorus as well as Ela (the cat). According to Ela, she performed the cat 55 times, but Terri hasn't found any documentation that this is accurate. Ela told her that the music made them forget their hunger and the bad things they had to experience. She told Terri that they ran to practices.

Terri also told about her experience in Prague at the Jewish Museum translating testimony. She color-coded the testimonies: red-emotional, green-resistance, blue-projection about Germans/Nazis, gold-spiritual resistance/musical profundity.

She ended with a photo-montage set to music which was written in Terizen: *Young Man Where Are You Going?*

We then moved to the Maria Angelorum Chapel for a special musical presentation by **Sonja Larson** and Dr. Mary Ellen Hauptert: “Music in the Holocaust: A Means of Survival.”

Sonja studied and researched in Krakow, Poland and visited camps, memorials, and museums. Her research was on how music was a means of survival for the victims/survivors of the Holocaust. From her research she concluded that not everyone had the same experience and that music played different roles for individuals. For some, music was a big part, it was marginal for some, and had no role for others. She said music was a means of literal survival as well as providing comfort and mental escape. Sonja told a story of a woman she interviewed who was literally pulled out of line for the gas chamber and saved because of her musical ability. She said the cello saved her life. As long as the Nazis wanted music, they would keep the musicians alive.



Sonja wrote three poems about her experiences; they were a way for her to process everything. She then performed these poems for us, which were set to music by Dr. Hauptert.

After Sonja's performance, **Amanda Wright**, who played the role of Anne Frank in the play Darryle directed, joined us. She talked about her experience and said it was the most important play and most memorable play she has ever done. She loved playing a character with a lot of spirit and learned that when horrible things occur we should not lose hope—even in daily life we need to have our own inner optimism.

The message she personally took away was how widespread and out of hand bullying can be and to tell others about stopping bullying. She said she never thought of herself as a bystander, but the play made her realize there was more she could do.

Photo Break and Bubbles! We took time for our annual group photo under the arched bench in the garden. This year, Darryle had a special treat for us: bubbles! And not just ordinary bubbles, but stacking bubbles! We enjoyed some carefree time outside after a great day of learning!



After another wonderful dinner we watched the film, *Kinderblock 66*. The film, told from four different survivor testimonies, was about the boys of Buchenwald in Block 66. Each man told his own story, but they all credited their survival to Antonin Kalina who was a communist imprisoned by the Nazis. Antonin was a member of a supposedly communist-led underground at the camp who decided to try to save the children. Their plan was to move all the boys to a new children's block, Block 66, which was isolated from most of the camp thus making it easier to hide the children. There, Kaline repeatedly put his own life in danger to keep the youngsters of his Block 66 alive. I was particularly touched by a statement made by one of the survivors at the end. He said he doesn't see himself as a survivor because one really didn't survive the Holocaust. He sees survivors as the "embers who didn't burn in the great fire."

All participants thought the film was great for our own learning and that we probably would not show the entire film to students—maybe clips, but we weren't sure.

Thursday



Bill Younglove opened our last morning with an invocation by showing us a photo of an "old friend." It was an age-enhanced photo of Anne Frank as today, June 12, is Anne's birthday. She would have been 85. Bill's words of honor and remembrance offered hope to all the Anne Frank's not yet born and those already living, that they may write into the future and reach their 85th birthday.

Mary Munson Murphy

Mary Munson Murphy shared with us the approximate two and a half year process she went through to write (with her daughter Sara) her recently published book: *Shanghai Deliverance*. It started when Mary visited Shanghai and found the shop where Edi grew up. She took photos for Edi and found a woman who told Mary she knew Edi's family and had actually held Edi as a baby.



Edi wanted to have her story written for her children and grandchildren and asked Mary several times if she would write it for her. Mary finally agreed with the condition that her daughter could help her. Edi still has the suitcase she brought with her from Shanghai, her doll and LOTS of documents! Hours were spent scanning over 600 documents---how they managed to bring so many things from Shanghai! There were 200 some photos, letters from Sachsenhausen, 133 documents to get Max the grandfather to Milwaukee, ticket stubs, receipts, death records...

The story is told in first person, with the historical parts in italics and the personal story in regular type. Mary researched all sorts of things in order to understand the stories and historical context--such as cigarette brands, and cruise routes. She spent hours listening to interview tapes from 1967 of Edi's parents, in addition to interviews with Edi and her family members. Mary concluded by showing a series of documents and playing a sound clip from an interview of Manfred, Edi's father. And naturally, the author signed copies!

Bill Younglove

Bill talked to us about making choices; "choiceful" choices; careful choices about teaching the Holocaust and other genocides. He mentioned if education is the answer, why wasn't it in the 1930s and 40s? Bill pointed out that 8 of 15 people at the Wannsee Conference had PhDs, and there has been research done on members of the Eizengruppen showing there was at least one member who held a PhD in religion who held a gun that killed Jews.



The choices we make as Holocaust educators about what we teach and when we teach it is important: we must know our audience (students) and our community. We must know our purpose and our rationale. Bill's current thinking is that we need to move away from "grade level appropriate" to "age appropriate" labels; that we may need to think about "shaping" curriculum as opposed to "prescribing" curriculum.

Another question Bill has been pondering is *What other animal besides the human commits genocide?* This has been one of his questions for a while, and he finally found an answer from Jeffery Masson's book, *BEASTS*: "no serious evidence supports the idea that any other animal other than the human being commits genocide."

Bill's ponderings and questions generated quite a bit of discussion and some books were recommended: Gigi recommended *The Tattered Prayer Book* and Mary recommended *The Bully, the Bullied and the Bystander* as a title to make the connection between bullying and genocide.

Dean Stoud



Our guest author, Dean Stoud talked about his research findings when putting together his book, *Preaching In Hitler's Shadow*. As a former pastor, he wanted to know what was like to be a pastor in the Third Reich. What was the climate of preaching—what did young preachers say on Sunday in Nazi Germany? They, like he, had the responsibility of taking a biblical passage and saying something to the congregation each week. The book has two parts, the first part is background and information about the context and the second part is the sermons. Dean wanted to give voice to those who had the courage to speak out.

There were 67 million people in Germany in 1930: 20 million Catholics, 40 million Protestants, 523,000 thousand Jews, and 7 million who didn't identify with religion. By far, there were enough Christians to have prevented the Nazis. The question is, WHY didn't they? The Christian church had lost its moral authority by the time Hitler came to power—nobody was listening to them anymore.

The Nazis had an official platform on Christianity known as “positive Christianity.” Positive Christianity supported the Nazi racial struggle against the Jews and had positive things to say about the entire Nazi platform. People could be charged with negative Christianity, which was anything that questioned or opposed the Nazi platform. The Nazi view of Jesus was he is outdated, a weakling, and a failure. Why would anyone worship a dead Jew anyway? Hitler was presented as the “new” messiah. Nazis rewrote the Christian Christmas carol Silent Night to represent Hitler's birth; the Bibles on pulpits were replaced with Mein Kampf.

The Nazi goal was to make everything in Nazism equal, but the Christian church was the one thing they were never able to really equalize. Christian pastors formed an emergency league to stop the Nazi take over of the church with one bishop. Seven thousand out of 18,000 joined and finally called themselves the German Confessing Church—must confess the church's creed, not the Nazi creed. This was the only non-Nazi organization that survived the war. The Nazis were never able to crush it. Their motto: “The Nazis will not tell us what to believe.”

Dean urged readers of the sermons to look for what was *not* said—this is what speaks volumes.

Lolle Boettcher

We participated in a timeline activity, which Lolle plans to present at the Missouri Holocaust Educator Institute in July. The years from 1933-1944 were posted around the room and we were grouped. Each group received a series of informational pages dealing with the topics of: victims, anti-Jewish laws and decrees, events, and world response. After following Lolle's directions for reading and gathering information from reading the informational sheet, groups placed each sheet on the timeline where they thought it best fit. Although we pushed through the activity for the sake of time, participants agreed that it was a valuable experience and that the discussion was the most valuable part of the activity.



Rabbi Simcha Prombaum



Rabbi Simcha began with the quote: *Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.* He then gave us the Hebrew translation: *A person unable to remember the past is condemned to repeat it.*

Remembering is not the opposite of forgetting in Hebrew language. To remember is to make it present—through words and actions; to focus and concentrate on what is really important—to remember that which should not be forgotten. Forgetting, on the other hand, is a willful act and there are two ways to see this. One, is *I knew it but I can't recall it.* The other route is *I knew it, but I don't want to remember it. I want it gone.*

Remembrance requires knowing what you are remembering and making it present in word and action, to differentiate between the kind of forgetting that is lack of reinforcement or recall and purposeful forgetting. That's why Holocaust education is more important than ever!

What a perfect message to send us on our way, to remind us why we do what we do. And we will do just that. Each in his/her own way, we will keep the memory of those who perished alive. We will purposefully make the Holocaust and the lessons to learned from it part of our action, until we gather again to renew and re-energize our passion.

