A MESSAGE FROM STRATEGIC ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE MEMBER JONATHAN S. LAVINE

Facing Facts That Speak for Themselves

Dear friends, touring the Museum’s new exhibition on the American response to the Holocaust, I was struck by the complexity of the twelve years it covers and the stark paradox between the events on the ground in Europe and the ability of Americans—if not willingness—to rationalize or ignore them.

People can rationalize any behavior. Kristallnacht happened in 1938, and there was no uprising among the German people. How is that possible? But then you look at Americans during this time. The fact is that our country could have saved more refugees desperate to escape Hitler, but Americans did not want to let more Jews in. There are many reasons people turn the other way, without always consciously understanding that is what they are doing.

During the Holocaust, events quickly moved from bothersome and upsetting to abhorrent and inconceivable. It is that slippery slope that is so imperceptible that sometimes you do not even know you are on it.

That is why learning about the Holocaust is critical for young people today. You cannot fight injustice if you do not have an understanding of how bad it can be or an awareness of signs that we should be stepping up and doing something.

The Museum’s most important responsibility is to keep this memory alive. As we get further away from those who experienced the Holocaust—and generations like mine who heard their stories firsthand—we cannot let this critical event in history be remembered as just another tragedy.
Two weeks after publication and great reviews in the Wall Street Journal and other outlets, The Unwanted is ranked 257 out of Amazon’s 8 million titles. A digital version of Michael Dobbs’s book designed to engage emerging adults has a planned release in fall 2019.

The groundbreaking Americans and the Holocaust Initiative is taking the lessons of the Holocaust far beyond the Museum’s walls, delivering compelling content directly to educators, students, and individuals worldwide. The Initiative is a ten-year initiative designed to reach a broad public audience, anchored by the exhibition of the same name, examines American society in the 1930s and ‘40s, including government, media, popular culture, civil society, and individual actions, in a way that’s never been done before. The Initiative provides a new platform for the Museum to advance its educational mission through expanded educational resources and key partnerships. “We have introduced this initiative now to thousands of educators both here in the Museum and through our digital resources. World War II is often taught with a few sidebar paragraphs on the Holocaust. Instead, the Museum is helping teachers integrate their teaching on the war and on Americans’ response to Nazism,” explains Gretchen Skidmore, the director of educational initiatives in the William Levine Family Institute for Holocaust Education. In addition to new collaboration efforts with Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, a leading educational publisher in the K–12 market, the Museum is partnering with the American Library Association on a traveling version of the exhibition launching in 2020 that will tour public and academic libraries throughout the United States. Also in the works is a new documentary film with a planned release in 2021. Filmmakers are working closely with Museum experts to explore the themes of the Initiative.

To date, the online exhibition has been viewed more than 315,000 times by 172,000 people. Planned educational resources include new modules of our primary source learning platform, Experiencing History.

New Facebook and Instagram followers since social media campaign launch in 2018. This represents a 200% increase on Facebook and a 54% increase on Instagram.

MAJOR SUPPORTERS
The Bildners—Joan & Allen z”l, Elisa Spungen & Rob, Nancy & Jim
Jane and Daniel Och

The Museum’s exhibitions are also supported by the Lester Robbins and Sheila Johnson Robbins Traveling and Special Exhibitions Fund, established in 1990.

LEAD SPONSOR
Jeannie & Jonathan Lavine

SPOTLIGHT
The Unwanted: America, Auschwitz, and a Village Caught in Between

NEW BOOK
You choose to go to any museum because you’ve identified the topic as something that is of interest to you or of importance. Now, the Museum has to find new ways to meet new generations where they are, going beyond the Museum’s physical space.”

—Jonathan S. Lavine
The Museum is focused on countering persistently existential threats to Holocaust memory in the lands of the Holocaust. What are the other trends driving this?

SJB: After the end of the war, over time Western Europe developed a consensus that included the promotion of democracy and human rights and increasing attention to the Holocaust. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe seemed to be joining this consensus. As new archives opened for the first time, and countries began to assume responsibility for Holocaust remembrance and education, it seemed that our cause was flourishing. But now we see that all seems to be under assault to various degrees as a result of globalization, economic issues, immigration, and new technologies—all leading to a rise in extremism, antisemitism, and nationalism.

What gives me hope is that I met officials at the German Parliament, including the German Chancellor, who are united on the importance of their historic and moral obligation to Holocaust remembrance and education.

SJB: What is the Museum’s unique role today?

SJB: We live in a moment of unprecedented change and new technologies that are creating significant levels of fear, resentment, and hate.

We know from the Holocaust that at times like these, people seek simple answers to complex questions. That often comes in the form of scapegoating. Right now the world needs trusted institutions, moral anchors, historical understanding, and critical thinking. That’s exactly what we aspire to do through Holocaust education designed to reach diverse audiences, especially young audiences, with the history and lessons of the Holocaust.

One goal is that the people we educate will think deeply about the Holocaust and ask themselves not only, “What would I have done?” but go on to ask, “What will I do?”

The Holocaust teaches us about the fragility of societies and the problems of human nature. It reveals our susceptibility to fear, resentment, and hate, and the role of ordinary people who were complicit in the Holocaust.

Our goal is that the people we educate will think not only about the Holocaust and the lessons of history, but also about the future of our societies and the problems of human nature. It reveals our susceptibility to fear, resentment, and hate, and the role of ordinary people who were complicit in the Holocaust.

The Museum holds its ceremony in our Hall of Remembrance designated by the United Nations. International Holocaust Remembrance Day (IHRD), a commemoration designated by the United Nations. The Museum holds its ceremony in our Hall of Remembrance on January 27th, 2023, to commemorate IHRD. Why is that significant at this moment?

SJB: Germany is experiencing something unprecedented. For the first time since 1945, the major opposition party in Parliament is a far-right party, whose leaders have minimized the Holocaust and told Germans that it is time to move on and get over what they call their “culture of shame.” Again, this is reflective of a dangerous trend that we are seeing across Europe.

What gives me hope is that I met officials from various parties in Germany who are united in their determination to combat this attack—who are united on the importance of their historic and moral obligation to Holocaust remembrance and education.
Ann Krouse fondly recalls when she and her late husband, Paul, made the trip to Washington with their then 11-year-old grandson Justin. "Justin was our oldest grandchild. When he heard us discussing our plan to bring each grandchild on similar trips he told us, 'Don't worry; if you are too old, I will bring the other cousins.'"

"Like all their children, Ann and Paul's late daughter Amy Krouse Rosenthal shared that passion. It was Ann's incredible knowledge and insight of the Museum through her years of involvement behind the scenes that led her to coin the term "a global classroom"—a phrase that has come to define the Museum's unique role.

"Paul and I were so proud to be involved with the Museum. It was toward that objective that more than ten years ago, the Museum's Midwest Region. "Her imprint is indelible in so many ways."

"In spring 2018 at the Museum's 25th anniversary events in Washington, DC, generations of the Krouse family dedicated themselves to the Museum, in every way possible. The Ann Wolk Krouse and Paul C. Krouse Family Endowment is a classic example of getting far more than we have ever given.'"

"The challenge is really to impart the same knowledge and insight of the Museum through their years of involvement behind the scenes that led her to coin the term "a global classroom"—a phrase that has come to define the Museum's unique role. "Ann's ability to look at our issues and find new, creative ways to approach them was enormous," remarked Jill Weinberg, the director of the Museum's Midwest Region. "Her imprint is indelible in so many ways."

"In spring 2018 at the Museum's 25th anniversary events in Washington, DC, generations of the Krouse family dedicated themselves to the Museum, in every way possible. The Ann Wolk Krouse and Paul C. Krouse Family Endowment is a classic example of getting far more than we have ever given.'"
Founding Family Makes Major Gift to Support the Museum’s Initiative on Holocaust Denial and Antisemitism

Strategic Advancement Committee member and former Museum Council member, Howard Konar, continues to follow in the footsteps of his late father William Konar—one of the Museum’s earliest leaders and most generous supporters. With a $6.2 million gift from the William & Sheila Konar Foundation, the Konar family is helping the Museum confront alarming trends of Holocaust denial and violent antisemitism where they are most prominent.

The Initiative will focus efforts on key areas: Western Europe, where there is a rise in deadly antisemitic violence and racist nationalism; Eastern Europe, where governments and political leaders of extremist parties are writing Nazi collaboration and complicity out of their national history; the Middle East and North Africa, where Holocaust distortion is prevalent in official, political, and intellectual circles; and Iran, where there are high levels of state-sponsored antisemitism and Holocaust denial.

The Initiative targets young adults (aged 17–30) and community leaders. By partnering with individuals and organizations in these regions, we are reaching new audiences and achieving unprecedented credibility as part of our efforts to inform people about the dangers of antisemitism, extremism, and Holocaust distortion.

None of us could have foreseen 10 or 15 years ago the disturbing rise of antisemitism globally. We don’t believe any other institution is better poised—with both the credibility and resources—to combat this than the Museum.”

—Howard Konar

Learn more about ways to support the Campaign for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:
Visit ushmm.org/campaign
Call 202.488.0435
E-mail campaign@ushmm.org

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As part of the Initiative’s focus on the dangers of propaganda in the age of the internet, our exhibition State of Deception: The Power of Nazi Propaganda traveled to Tunisia, Brussels, Paris, and three other locations in France. ABOVE: Professor Habib Kazdaghi presents the exhibition in Arabic, French, and English at universities, private secondary schools, and libraries throughout Tunisia.