Holocaust Center to Honor Susan and Gordon Arkin

The Holocaust Center has chosen local activists Susan and Gordon Arkin as honorees at this year’s Dinner of Tribute. For decades, this remarkable couple has identified needs and inspired change throughout our community.

Susan has championed public school education from the classroom to the boardroom – from serving as a volunteer mentor/tutor to being Chairman of the Orange County Public School Board. She served on the Holocaust Center Board of Directors for 22 years and is presently an Emeritus Board Member. Susan is also a member of the Valencia College Peace and Justice Initiative’s Advisory Council, an Emeritus Board member at the Orlando Shakespeare Theater, and is actively involved with the 100 Women Strong Giving Circle and the Evans Community School.

Gordon began his volunteer career as the founding chairman of the Orlando chapter of the National Conference for Christians and Jews (NCCJ). As his commitment to the community grew, so did his involvement in a variety of organizations. He currently serves as the Board Chair of Seniors First, Inc.; he is chairing the New Hope for Kids capital campaign; he established the Business Lawyers’ Pro Bono Project at the Rollins College Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership Center; and he is active in a number of other vital community projects.

Gordon has always been, and continues to be, the Holocaust Center’s trusted source of pro bono advice in many areas.

Through their extraordinary efforts, the Arkins have bettered the lives of all of us who call Central Florida home. They are wonderful ambassadors for the Holocaust Center and our mission to create an inclusive, caring community where everyone feels welcome and valued.

The Dinner will be held Tuesday, April 28, 2015 at The Rosen Plaza Hotel, 9700 International Drive, Orlando. It will begin at 5:30 PM with a silent auction and hors d’oeuvres. Reservations are now being accepted through the Holocaust Center’s website (www.holocaustedu.org) or by calling the Center at 407-628-0555.
As I look back on 2014 I realize what an exceptional year it has been for our Center. It has not been by accident. Under the experienced and thoughtful leadership of our Executive Director, Pam Kancher, the Holocaust Center has expanded our outreach, our programming, our educational offerings and our funding.

We have wonderful staff! Mitchell Bloomer does an exceptional job of engaging and educating thousands of students. Raychel Cesaro facilitates our development and fundraising, including the Dinner of Tribute. Susan Mitchell continues to increase our grants and Bailey Robb has done a wonderful job enhancing our UpStanders Stand Up to Bullying Initiative. Es Cohen is here several days a week to provide critical support for all our projects, and of course we have some of the community’s best volunteers.

Our Board is smaller, by design. I am proud of their increased participation levels, commitment to our mission and willingness to be Ambassadors of the Center to the community at large. Likewise, our Officers and Executive Committee have worked hard to ensure oversight of our operations and budget. As with all non-profits, we are ever mindful that even with success at increasing revenues through the Dinner of Tribute and grants, we must continue to look for new sources of funding to support our operations and programming.

This past year, we have continued our outreach by spearheading the community-wide celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. Through the generosity of our former President Jim Shapiro and his wife, Valerie, both community leaders, “The Best of Enemies” was presented in partnership with the Orlando Shakespeare Theater. That and many other programs and exhibits allowed thousands of people who would otherwise not come to our Center to learn who we are and what we do. This is critical to our success as a dynamic organization.

In order to ensure the Holocaust is not some distant memory, we must make it relevant to issues here and abroad which raise the specter of anti-Semitism, prejudice, hatred and intolerance. And I believe we are doing that very well. Our UpStanders program, based in Holocaust Education, is now in its fifth year and has expanded into three counties. This year, we are partnering with the City of Orlando to offer the program in all OCPS middle schools in Orlando! We are very excited about this and want to thank Mayor Buddy Dyer for recognizing the merits and proven results of our program. Finally, ever mindful that we must plan for the future, our Center of the Future committee has been very active. I want to thank Bruce Gould and his hard-working committee for their invaluable assistance and insight.

These are indeed exciting times! As we move forward into 2015, I have nothing but great expectations for the Holocaust Center. I want to again thank our staff, our officers, and the Executive Committee and Board. And I want to particularly thank you, our supporters and advocates. Together, we can and will make a difference.
In June 1980, Valencia Community College and the Jewish Federation of Greater Orlando partnered with Tess Wise and The Holocaust Project to sponsor a community-wide conference on the Holocaust and relevant human rights issues. The purpose of the conference was to focus on the social, historical, moral, ethical and economic implications of the Holocaust and to show how these related to human rights issues facing the world, the country and citizens of Central Florida. Over 500 people from across the globe attended the two-day conference.

Originally housed on Valencia’s downtown campus, The Holocaust Project also developed a program series (funded in part by the Florida Endowment for the Humanities) that included teacher training seminars, interfaith dialogue programs, a speaker’s bureau, art exhibits and an essay contest on the Holocaust and human rights. In 1986 the dream for a permanent home was realized and the doors opened to our current Holocaust Center.

During our almost 35 year history we have not strayed from The Holocaust Project’s original vision and purpose established by our founder Tess Wise and the “interfaith board of directors” that she strategically recruited from all sectors of our community. We continue to draw comparisons to the lessons learned from the Holocaust and its impact on the moral, ethical and human rights of all people.

Launched five years ago, our UpStanders: Stand Up To Bullying initiative helps students understand one of the most important lessons of the Holocaust, that one person can make a difference. The UpStanders program reflects the history of people, known as Righteous Gentiles, who were willing to get involved when others were in danger. Instead of being bystanders, they became UpStanders by actively protecting the rights and safety of others. Millions of lives have been saved by UpStanders; millions others might have been saved if more people had been willing to follow their conscience and had become involved in protecting others.

As you will read in subsequent pages of this issue, the Holocaust Center was honored to take a leadership role in celebrating and commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act. It is because of Tess Wise and the vision of The Holocaust Project that our Holocaust Center was uniquely situated to engage our community in the difficult conversations of equality, justice and human rights; past, present and future.

Most importantly, your ongoing investment in our mission and programs will allow us to continue to be a leader in building a community of respect, understanding and acceptance.
### UPCOMING CULTURAL EVENTS

**February 12** (Thursday) FORUM
*Holocaust Graphic Novels*, 6 PM at the Holocaust Center

**February 26** (Thursday) Film: *Herblock the Black and the White*, 7 PM at the Holocaust Center

**March 12** (Thursday) FORUM *Downfall: The Death Throes of Nazi Germany*, 6 PM at the Holocaust Center

**April 1** Exhibit opening: David Friedmann *Because We Were Jews*, 2PM at the Holocaust Center

**April 9** FORUM *The Impact of Liberation on America*, 6 PM at the Holocaust Center

**April 19** (Sunday) Yom HaShoah, 4 PM at the JCC Gymnasium

**April 28** (Tuesday) Dinner of Tribute, 5:30 PM Rosen Plaza

**May 7** (Thursday) FORUM *What Came Next for Survivors?*, 6 PM at the Holocaust Center

**June 15 – 19** (Mon—Fri) Teachers Institute, 8:30 AM – 4:40 PM at the Holocaust Center

**July 6** (tentative) opening of Ravensbruck Exhibit at the Holocaust Center

**July (TBD)** – 4 week workshop on Comparative Religion Series at the Holocaust Center in partnership with the Interfaith Council of Central Florida

### Holocaust Survivor Story Continues to Gain Recognition

2014 Yom HaShoah speaker and 2013 Global EBook award-winning author Joanie Holzer Schirm has another thing to feel proud about. Schirm’s Czech father and his life story play a prominent role in a prestigious permanent museum exhibit in Shanghai. In September 2014, a stunning sculpture commemorating a unique history, titled “Shanghai Haven,” was unveiled at the Shanghai Jewish Refugees Museum. A wall displays the names of 14,000 former Shanghai Jewish refugees, including Joanie’s father, Oswald Holzer.

Between 1933 and 1941 over 20,000 European Jews found refuge from Nazi persecution in Shanghai. Known as the “port of last resort” during the Sino-Japanese fighting in 1937, the Japanese won control of the entry port. In this unique setting there was, for a period, an absence of passport control as the refugees arrived. Immigration was at this time restricted by strict quotas worldwide, so Shanghai provided a place that saved many lives during the Holocaust.

Joanie Holzer Schirm describes the profound nature of this history in this way: “I exist because my father found safe harbor there in July 1939 after he’d escaped from Prague.”

One month after her dad arrived from Prague, anyone seeking to enter Shanghai needed to obtain a certificate of permission. Soon after that, exorbitant landing fees were charged. “He was a very lucky man,” Schirm says.

Dr. Holtzer’s life is now documented in his daughter Joanie’s book, *Adventurers Against Their Will*, the story of a group of her father’s Prague friends who scattered in the world once the Nazis occupy their homeland. They correspond with him during the war and he secretly saved the letters which were discovered and translated upon his death.

*Adventurers Against Their Will* is now recommended reading for high school students by the Florida Department of Education. Listed alongside such classics as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Separate Peace*, it is on the only nonfiction book listed with an emphasis on a life lesson that exemplifies the importance of protecting human rights and dignity. Schirm will provide Lesson Plans for teachers as a free download on her author website, [www.joanieschirm.com](http://www.joanieschirm.com).
Exhibit’s Messages Still Relevant, Inspiring

The Holocaust Center is currently exhibiting the political cartoons of Pulitzer Prize winner Herb Block whose work is best known by his signature ‘Herblock’. Although his cartoons stretch back more than a half-century, his themes and comments are strikingly appropriate to today.

His series of panels on the theme of racism could easily be mistaken for editorial cartoons in today’s paper. The illustrations, first published in the mid-1960s, comment on the struggles of “two Americas” – black and white, rich and poor – that are a sad reminder of work still to be done.

Similarly, his observations on democracy reflect topics and conversations that are part of current events. A clever cartoon about government surveillance, for example, is clearly applicable to Congressional comments and investigations right now. Remarkably, that particular cartoon was published in 1950, leading one to wonder when, if ever, we can solve some of the stickier problems of democracy.

It was not just his skill at observing and explaining events that made Herb Block such an important influencer of public opinion. He was one of the most fearless commentators in America, never hesitating to lambast members of both political parties and to explore topics that many would prefer to keep off-limits.

In addition to the exhibit, which will be at the Center until the end of March, there are two free programs planned that will explore Herb Block’s perspectives and influence. On February 12 the Center’s Resource Teacher, Mitch Bloomer, will be discussing the educational value of cartoons in generating understanding and interest in historic events. On Thursday, February 26 the Center will be screening the film Herblock: The Black and the White, a 2014 HBO documentary that pays tribute to his life and his influence.
When the Holocaust Center was founded more than thirty years ago, it was created as a state-of-the-art space that would be both informative and inviting to its many visitors. It has been an important asset to the community, educating thousands of visitors each year about the history and lessons of that watershed time in history.

While the need for Holocaust education has remained unchanged over the years, the tools – particularly technology – are far different today than in the 1980s.

A long-range evaluation of the Center’s strengths and challenges identified two significant areas in which improvements were both necessary and achievable.

According to the Center’s Executive Director, Pam Kancher, one of the most obvious problems was the difficulty for visually-impaired visitors and those who were not fluent in English.

“As a destination for international tourists,” Kancher says, “we’ve long recognized that our signage, almost exclusively in English, makes a less-than-satisfactory experience for our many Spanish-speaking visitors. Also, because much of the museum experience is visual – photographs, texts and archival items in display cases – a guest with limited vision would have to depend on a companion to read the panels and describe the exhibits.”

Two years ago the Center’s leadership began investigating technology that would make the Center more welcoming to any visitor not able to read and understand the important information. The most practical option, they decided, was to install a form of audio guide that enabled guests to hear prerecorded explanations of printed information and exhibits in either English or Spanish.

A second problem that the audio tours would resolve is the difference between the self-guided tours offered to casual visitors and the group and school tours led by the Center’s Resource Teacher, Mitch Bloomer.

“When Mitch is with a group,” Kancher notes, “he explains the importance of items on display and he asks thought-provoking questions. He can make history come alive in ways that people touring alone won’t get.”

After interviewing a number of vendors, the Center chose Q Media of Winter Garden to provide the tours.

“We were immediately comfortable with their approach,” Kancher says. “They clearly understood that it isn’t the cold facts we want people to know. They, like us, believe that the history of the Holocaust is a very human story of real lives. They have the talent and experience to tell the story in the most effective way.”

Although Q Media operates nationwide (recent projects include work with the Texas Historical Commission and Alaska’s Kenai National Wildlife Refuge) the fact that their home office is based in Central Florida is an additional benefit, allowing very easy communications between partners.

The final digital product will be a 45-minute tour that will be accessed on smart phones, either the user’s own phone or one available on loan from the Center. It will allow the user to choose either English or Spanish narration, and will play brief snippets of information at each of about 20 easily-identified stops. Launch of the audio tour is expected by early summer.
David Friedmann: Painting to Survive  
April 1 through June 27

This spring the Holocaust Center will be exhibiting the works of David Friedmann (1893-1980) whose talent for portraiture played a central role throughout his career and saved his life during the Holocaust.

Born in Mährisch Ostrau, Austria-Hungary (today Ostrava, Czech Republic), Friedmann moved to Berlin and became a successful artist. When the Nazi persecution of Jews began in 1933, he was no longer permitted to work and ordered to remove his art from the galleries. In 1938, Friedmann fled with his family to Prague, only to be deported in 1941 to the Lodz Ghetto, then to camps Auschwitz-Birkenau and Gleiwitz I. Nazi authorities looted his oeuvre of 2,000 works in Berlin and Prague.

Friedmann survived a Death March to Camp Blechhammer, where he was liberated in January 1945 by the Red Army. Torn from his memories, he created the powerful series, Because They Were Jews! The artwork shows the evolution of the Holocaust from his deportation to the ghetto and several concentration camps until liberation. He supplemented his testimony with descriptions of the scenes portrayed in his works to create a singularly detailed pictorial and written record. His postwar journey led him from Czechoslovakia to Israel to the United States.

After his death, his daughter, Miriam Friedman Morris, collected and organized his works which have been displayed worldwide. Numerous pieces of the collection are available online and on display at the Holocaust History Museum, Yad Vashem, in Jerusalem.

The exhibition at the Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida presents a rare opportunity for area visitors to see so much of the collection in one exhibition.

WE COULDN’T DO IT WITHOUT YOUR HELP!

Much of what we are able to accomplish at the Holocaust Center would not be possible without our wonderful volunteers. This school year, retired teachers Roslyn Leventhal and Renee Kaplan began volunteering with the UpStanders: Stand Up to Bullying Initiative. “As teachers with many years of classroom experience, Roz and Renee were the perfect fit,” said Program Coordinator, Bailey Robb. When as many as 150 students arrive at the Holocaust Center for their first visit, Roz and Renee welcome the students with smiling faces as if it were the first day of school. Both Mrs. Leventhal and Mrs. Kaplan incorporated Holocaust Education into their lessons during their careers as public school teachers. As a result, the two are able to assist students as they wander through the museum by answering questions and explaining the lessons of the Holocaust. “They really help us give deeper meaning to the photographs and artifacts,” says Bailey. “The students love working with them.” We are so thankful to Roz and Renee for their dedication to Holocaust Education. For more information on how to volunteer with the UpStanders Program, please contact Program Coordinator, Bailey Robb via phone: (407) 628-0555 ext. 263, or via email: brobb@holocaustedu.org.
Yom HaShoah Community Event to Focus on Courage and Freedom

Sunday, April 19, 2015 at 4:00 PM at the Jewish Community Center Gymnasium (next door to the Holocaust Center)
851 N Maitland Avenue, Maitland

The Holocaust Center invites individuals and families from throughout the community to join us for our Yom HaShoah commemorative program. The Center hosts the observance each year to remember the lives of the six million Jews who died during the Holocaust, and to honor the Survivors, Liberators and Rescuers who keep those memories alive.

This year’s speaker will be Yael Hershfield, Senior Associate Regional Director of the Anti-Defamation League. The ADL was founded in 1913 and is now the nation’s premier civil rights/human relations agency. The ADL fights anti-Semitism and all forms of bigotry, defending democratic ideals and protecting civil rights for all.

The current focus of the ADL in Florida is to deliver effective anti-bias education programs to educators and students of all ages; training law enforcement about hate crimes and extremist groups; safeguarding civil rights; confronting anti-Semitism whenever and wherever it occurs; fielding discrimination complaints of all kinds; and promoting interfaith relations. The ADL Florida Office is on the frontline of ensuring the safety of the Jewish community in Florida through its community education and advocacy.

The Yom HaShoah program will feature awards presentations to winners of the Yom HaShoah Student Creative Arts Contest. This year’s Honorary Chair, Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings, will help present the awards. In addition, there will be a traditional responsive reading and prayer by local clergy, and candle lighting by area Survivors.

The program is open to the public free of charge. Reservations are not required. For more information call 407-628-0555.

STUDENT ARTS CONTEST ENTRIES INVITED

Each year the Holocaust Center sponsors a student creative arts contest open to all students in Central Florida. Categories include: Art, 3-D art, Poetry, Creative Writing, Essay, Digital Media, and Research Paper Prizes to be awarded:

$50 GIFT CARD FOR 1ST PLACE IN EACH CATEGORY
$25 GIFT CARD FOR 2ND PLACE IN EACH CATEGORY
BOOK FOR EACH 3RD PLACE
CERTIFICATES FOR ALL, INCLUDING HONORABLE MENTIONS
BOOK FOR EVERY PARTICIPATING TEACHER

The theme for 2015 is *Freedom Summers*—1944 and 1964. Deadline for submitting entries is March 17.

Complete information, including guidelines and a downloadable cover sheet, can be found on the Holocaust Center’s website, www.holocaustedu.org or at http://tinyurl.com/YHContest.

The Day of Remembrance

Yom HaShoah Student Creative Arts Contest
Open to all students K-12 in public, private and home schools

TOPIC: THE FREEDOM SUMMERS

DEADLINE IS TUESDAY, MARCH 17, 2015 AT 4 PM

Speaker Yael Hershfield
UPSTANDERS PARTNERING WITH MAYOR’S OFFICE TO EXPAND REACH

Stand Up Orlando!

We know that everyone plays a part in fostering a community of tolerance and respect, especially young people. The Holocaust Center’s UpStanders: Stand Up To Bullying initiative reaches students at a critical time in their social and emotional development, challenging sixth and seventh graders to hold themselves and their peers to a high standard of social responsibility. The students who participate in UpStanders will shape our community in the coming years. That is why the UpStanders Program seeks to serve all middle school students in Central Florida.

Impacting all students in Central Florida requires the support of today’s community leaders. Last summer, bullying in local public schools. Time and again the Holocaust Center’s UpStanders initiative was cited as an effective program making strides in the Central Florida area, serving more than 12,000 students in Central Florida since 2010 and continuing to expand. Evaluation results from 2014 indicate that 98% of participants agreed that they were more willing to stand up for those who are treated unfairly as a result of participating in the program. The initiative is consistently growing to adapt to best practices and serve as many students as possible. This year, there will be an added teacher training component to help educators become better allies for students who are experiencing bullying at school.

The Mayor decided that the best way to address bullying behavior in Orlando was to launch a community-wide campaign in support of the UpStanders: Stand Up To Bullying. On October 23, 2014 the Mayor announced the City’s new initiative: Stand Up Orlando, a partnership between the City of Orlando and local businesses that will provide funding for the UpStanders initiative in all nine Orlando public schools. The Mayor’s project aligns perfectly with the goals of the Holocaust Center: to create a Central Florida community where diversity is celebrated and everyone feels respected.

The initiative is already underway as all nine OCPS middle schools in the city of Orlando have scheduled field trips to the Holocaust Center. By learning about bystanders and rescuers in the Holocaust, students will be inspired to stand up to bullying and promote respect in their schools. Renowned speaker John Halligan will be here in May as part of the initiative. Mr. Halligan will present to students at each school and host two evening programs for parents. Event details will be on the Center’s website when they are confirmed.

For more information on the Mayor’s Campaign to End Bullying, visit: http://www.cityoforlando.net/mayor/about-stand-up-orlando/

For information about the UpStanders: Stand Up To Bullying initiative, visit http://tinyurl.com/upstanders.

Celebrating the new initiative with Mayor Dyer are (from left) Raychel Cesaro, Michele Brennan, Bailey Robb, Jeff Miller, and Mitch Bloomer

Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer attended the National Conference of Mayors in Dallas, Texas. He was one of several Mayors to sign the Mayor’s Campaign to End Bullying, a joint project between The U.S. Conference of Mayors and The BULLY Project, a social action campaign inspired by the film BULLY. As a result, Mayor Dyer pledged to address bullying in his community.

Upon returning to Orlando, the Mayor began looking for local organizations to partner with in order to address
U. S. Civil Rights Act 50th Anniversary Programs

The fiftieth anniversary of the passage and signing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 provided an extraordinary opportunity for the Holocaust Center to explore themes of prejudice, marginalization, and contemporary forms of racism and segregation. Joined by over fifty local partners, the Center provided opportunities for the community to come together and to start the sometimes difficult conversations that are necessary to move forward.

The heart of the Holocaust Center’s efforts was an exhibit, Hateful Things, created and circulated by the Jim Crow Museum of Racist Memorabilia. The display consisted of stereotypes and racist material in advertising, entertainment and other media that demeaned and marginalized African-Americans.

Reactions from visitors ranged from the surprised comments by young people who were appalled that such caricatures existed, to older adults who remembered all too clearly how African Americans have been portrayed. Written comments in the visitor book were particularly touching: ‘I appreciated seeing original artifacts,’ one woman wrote. ‘I know that racism is real... the artifacts made it come to life for me.’ Another visitor said that some of those artifacts were in her family’s home when she was a child, and she now cringes at what once seemed so acceptable.

The opening reception for the exhibit featured Dr. Marvin Newman, who shared his personal struggles with discrimination in Central Florida as a young man in the 1950s, particularly the casualness of hateful speech.

Three forums aimed at educators brought home the necessary lessons of historic racism. In September, the Center’s Resource Teacher, Mitchell Bloomer, spoke on In the Shadow of Jim Crow: A Challenging Perspective on the Nuremberg Laws. The October forum featured A History of the Civil Rights Struggle in the United States presented by Dr. Julian Chambliss. In November, the program featured guest speaker former skinhead Angela King sharing her story about how she went from skinhead activist to redemption, and who now speaks candidly about life after hate.

Several powerful films were part of the cultural season. On September 7, the Center partnered with the Enzian Theater and the Global Peace Film Festival in presenting a screening and a panel discussion of the film Booker’s Place. The
Bring Orlando’s Diverse Communities Together

documentary, the story of a Black waiter who spoke openly about racism in a 1963 documentary was followed by a touching discussion led by panelists Rudi Clare (‘Negro Spiritual’ Scholarship Foundation), Jill Schwartz (Jill Schwartz and Associates), Krystal Pherai (Valencia College Peace and Justice Initiative), and John Davis (African-American Chamber of Commerce).

Two weeks later, the Center hosted short films and lecture at the Holocaust Center, *Harry and Harriette Moore: Life and Death in the Time of Segregation* with filmmakers Lisa Mills and Robert Thompson, and Bill Gary, Director of the Moore Center, and on October 19 the Holocaust Center sponsored a screening of the documentary *The Last White Knight* at the Orlando Museum of Art which included a QA with filmmaker Paul Saltzman.

One of the highlights of the season was a partnership with the Orlando Shakespeare Theater in presenting the drama *The Best of Enemies*, based on the bestselling book by Osha Gray Davidson. The Best of Enemies is a true story about C.P. Ellis, a Grand Cyclops of the KKK, and Ann Atwater, an African-American civil rights activist, during the 1971 court-ordered desegregation of Durham, North Carolina schools. One performance at the Shakespeare Theater was dedicated as a fundraiser for the Holocaust Center.

The final major program was a panel discussion on Marginalized Communities. While we recognize that the Civil Rights Act was a long step forward toward equality of rights under the law, there are still barriers and closed doors that prevent some members of our community from achieving true justice. The program featured a panel representing diverse members of our community: Michael Slaymaker from Easter Seals, Sister Ann Kendrick and Eli Garcia from the Hope CommUnity Center, Bryan Fulwider of Building US, and moderator Darryl Owens from the Orlando Sentinel.

Each shared their experiences of marginalization and less-than-full participation in the community. It was clear from the audience comments and questions that we recognize how far we have come, but recognize that we still have far to go.

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Many of these programs have been included in the Orlando Memory Project sponsored by the Orange County Library system. Portal to that site is http://dc.ocls.info/.

The Holocaust Center’s Civil Rights programs were funded in part by Orange County Government through the Arts & Cultural Affairs Program, United Arts of Central Florida, PNC Foundation, the Florida Division of Cultural Affairs, Solomon Schick and Associates, and the Florida Humanities Council.
Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida

Dr. King and the Meaning of Civil Rights

Mitchell Bloomer, Holocaust Center Resource Teacher

Throughout the 2014-2015 school year, the Holocaust Center has joined with many partner organizations to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. We have also made this a primary focus of our educational work. With students, we emphasize the larger goals of the Civil Rights Movement beyond the passage of a single law or the redress of a particular grievance.

We direct students’ attention to the beginning of our republic when the signers of the Declaration of Independence brought forth a vision of a new society. The self-evident truth that all men are created equal would be its founding principle. Of course, this was not a statement of reality at that time, but rather the expression of a goal to be achieved.

Part of the genius of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was to remind Americans, using the words of the Declaration, that the dream had not yet been achieved. His goal was to inspire Americans with good and noble ideas from their history to do what was needed to be done to finally realize the vision. Implied in his message was the need for the majority of Americans who enjoyed their full freedoms and civil rights to stand up for those who did not.

In our society, to knowingly write a worthless check is a crime. In the same way, to deny civil rights to another is also a crime.

Throughout our history, many have seen the task of standing up for the rights and dignity of others to be a worthy, but optional endeavor. Something to be done by heroes – exceptional by definition. Dr. King, however, recognized the flaw in this reasoning. He compared the right to freedom and equality as a “promissory note” which was payable upon demand. Such a note functions like a check in that the bearer already has legal possession of the value and needs only to present the document to the bank to receive the funds. In our society, to knowingly write a worthless check is a crime. In the same way, to deny civil rights to another is also a crime. Additionally, to witness this crime without attempting in some way to help the victim makes the bystander an accessory.

Some might agree in principle with this argument, yet still suggest that the responsibility for action lies elsewhere. After all, the Declaration of Independence makes the case that “to protect these rights, governments are instituted among men.” It has become fashionable in our country today to speak of the government as if it is an alien entity, apart from the people who make up the nation. The truth is, however, that we are the government. In a free society, based on democratic values and institutions, we cannot dodge our obligations. All of us must defend our fellow citizens whenever their rights are threatened or denied.

We have long recognized that the Nazis carried out the crimes of the Holocaust enabled, in part, by the fact that too few people were willing to stand up for the rights and dignity of their Jewish neighbors. We must make sure that we never allow such apathy to take root again.

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Teachers Institute June 15-19

Registrations are now being accepted for the Center’s Twentieth Annual Teachers Institute on Holocaust Studies.

Teachers at all grade levels and in every discipline can attend the 5 day, forty hour training that prepares educators to provide effective Holocaust education.

The course includes:

- A chronological history of the Holocaust beginning with pre-WWI and ending with contemporary anti-Semitism and hate groups
- Pedagogy sessions designed to introduce effective materials and approaches so that lessons on the Holocaust are taught accurately and respectfully
- A review of resources available from the Holocaust Center and other providers that improve and simplify classroom study of the Holocaust

Full details, including registration forms, can be found at http://tinyurl.com/HMREC-TI.

Questions can be directed to Susan Mitchell or Mitch Bloomer at 407-628-0555 or info@holocaustedu.org.
Thanks to the generosity of Melvin and Zelda Siskind, visitors to the Holocaust Center enjoy a major improvement in how well they can hear a presentation in the back exhibit room. A new high quality sound system, complete with sound enhancement for visitors with hearing impairments, has been installed and is now in use.

At Melvin’s suggestion, he and his wife, Zelda, decided that upon their passing, they wanted to donate funds to various Jewish charities; the Holocaust Center being one of their primary recipients. The couple has a long history of involvement with the Center and with the founders, Tess and Abe Wise. Melvin and Zelda moved from Georgia to Sanford as newlyweds in 1948 and met the Wises (who had not yet married) as they socialized with Orlando’s young Jewish community.

“Melvin and I always admired Tess’s determination to build a local Holocaust center and knew her efforts would create a successful educational resource” Zelda says. “Melvin and I have always been particularly supportive of education; having students and the community learn about the Holocaust in a meaningful way was very important to us.”

The purchase of a sound system also has special meaning to all of the Siskind family. “We realized how my husband struggled his last few years as his hearing declined,” Zelda says. “I remember how excited he was when we were attending a grandchild’s Bat Mitzvah in Boston, and the synagogue had a sound system that enabled him to hear everything so clearly. After I talked with Pam Kancher (Executive Director of the Holocaust Center), I realized this was an ideal way to fulfill our desire to provide a meaningful opportunity to help others truly value what the Holocaust Center offers. Melvin would be proud, as am I, to do this for the community.”

ART ON DISPLAY AT THE HOLOCAUST CENTER

The Holocaust Center has long used fine art to help tell the story of the Holocaust and the valuable lessons we can learn from its unfolding. In addition to displays in the permanent and rotating exhibits, a number of works are on display in hallways and library walls for our visitors to enjoy.

A new piece, a signed lithograph of Rainbow Sabbath by Judy Chicago, was recently installed at the Center. It is the concluding image in The Holocaust Project: From Darkness into Light, a traveling exhibition that Chicago created in collaboration with her husband, photographer Donald Woodman. That exhibition came to Orlando in 2003 through a cooperative project with the Holocaust Center and the Orlando Museum of Art. It depicts people joined together across differences in age, gender, race, faith and culture in what the artist called a “message of hope and harmony.” The work is owned by Judith and Warren Kaplan of Altamonte Springs, and is on loan from their private collection.
Holocaust Center Celebrates Survivors While Creating a Place For a New Generation

For the past decade the Holocaust Center has sponsored an informal luncheon for area Holocaust Survivors. It offers them an opportunity to catch up on family stories and enjoy the fellowship of a good meal together.

This year’s event brought together a dozen survivors, including one first-time participant, and their guests. As they shared their stories and discussed their current lives, one could not help but admire the strength and the passion that brought them to us.

In addition to Survivors and their guests, this year Nadav Weil, a student at the Jewish Academy of Orlando, was invited to attend the event.

Nadav became interested in working with the Center in 2014 when he decided to “twin” with a young Holocaust Victim as part of his Bar Mitzvah. With help from the Holocaust Center’s staff, he located a young relative to honor, and the Holocaust Center created a certificate to commemorate that relationship. In addition, Nadav was invited to participate as a speaker at Yom HaShoah where he reminded the audience “...it is up to us to take up the torch of their lives by dedicating ourselves to not just remembering them but passing this tradition on to our children and grandchildren.”

And, indeed, Nadav has devoted himself to remembering. He recently interviewed local Survivor Sonja Marchesano and created an essay on her life.

Of this experience, Nadav says, “Meeting Sonja Marchesano was very meaningful for me, talking to any person that went through something as momentous as this. What we must learn from this story is that to preserve the past and to protect the future we must never forget what happened.”

UPSTANDERS BENEFIT HELD AT DAVID YUMAN JEWELERS

More than $10,000 was raised for the Center’s UpStanders: Stand Up to Bullying initiative this past Fall during a benefit event Jeffrey Miller and Ted Maines hosted at David Yurman at The Mall at Millenia. All proceeds will help the Center continue its bullying prevention efforts with middle school students and develop a new, online learning platform for educators.

Learn more about the UpStanders initiative on our website at holocaustedu.org/education/UpStanders.
Kristallnacht Commemoration Brings Music of Courage to Community

The Holocaust Center’s 2014 community commemoration for Kristallnacht featured an extraordinary program of music that included compositions ranging from a traditional Hassidic Nigun to contemporary Erev Shalom and Yossel Ben Herschel’s Elegy for the Six Million.

Performed by Dr. Aaron Hilbun on oboe and Rose Shlyam Grace on piano, the music brought to mind scenes from pre-war childhoods, memories of cherished communities, and the realities of devastating loss. It stood as a clear reminder of a culture nearly extinguished under Nazi rule, and celebrated the need to survive and remember.

Dr. Aaron I. Hilbun has been featured as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral player on four continents. Notable solo appearances include Evensong at St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, at the Festival Internacional Bach in Trujillo, Peru, at the Czech Music Camp for Youth in Horni Jeleni, Czech Republic and with the Okinawa Symphony Orchestra (Japan). A longtime Central Florida resident, Aaron performs locally with the Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, the Brevard Symphony and Walt Disney World Orchestras and the Orlando Wind Quintet. He is a familiar presence at Holocaust Center programs; he and his wife, violinist Lisa Ferrigno, have provided music for Yom HaShoah programs for a number of years.

Rose Shlyam Grace, a Russian-born pianist, has performed throughout the United States as a soloist and chamber music recitalist. She has collaborated in recitals with several distinguished artists, and has been a featured artist at conferences, including the Rachmaninoff International Festival in Naples, FL, the National MTNA Conference in NYC, the National Flute Convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, the International Double Reed Conference in Norman, Oklahoma, and the Florida State Music Teachers Association Conferences.

In 2009, she joined the faculty at Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, where she currently holds the position of Associate Professor of Music and in 2012 she began serving as an adjunct professor of piano at Daytona State College.

AUTHOR BORIS FISHMAN FEATURED AT HOLOCAUST CENTER EVENT

On January 25th the Holocaust Center was honored to host a presentation and book-signing with author Boris Fishman. His novel, A Replacement Life, tells the humorous, complicated, and sometimes painful story of a young Soviet émigré, Slava Gelman, and his extended community. Slava is a struggling writer lured into his grandfather’s plot to falsify documents so that he and his Russian-born immigrant neighbors could qualify for Holocaust restitution claims.

During a conversation with the standing-room-only crowd at the Center, Fishman talked about the creation of the book’s characters. When Fishman came to the United States from the Soviet Union at age nine, he said he needed “to belong to the place I came to, not the place I came from,” helping him develop Slava’s mixed emotions in dealing with his family’s history.

Fishman also talked at length about the ambiguity of the plot. The elderly men who asked for his help had survived the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. They had suffered, but not in ways or places that might qualify them for reparations. At that point, the issues of what is legal, moral, ethical and justified become great shades of gray for the characters, the author, and the readers.

The event was sponsored by GreenbergTraurig and held in partnership with Bookmark It bookstore at East End Market.
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Board member Michael Greenberg presents Pam Kancher a check from the SunTrust Foundation

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A SPECIAL OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU

Do you want a unique way to thank Susan and Gordon Arkin for their efforts to build a better community — and at the same time, help fund the Holocaust Center’s important projects? Purchase an ad in the Dinner of Tribute program book!

For ad information or to make your dinner reservations go to http://tinyurl.com/DinnerOfTribute. To discuss donating an item for the Silent Auction, or to make reservations over the phone, please call Raychel Cesaro at 407-628-0555 x 285.

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Do you have Holocaust-related books or family items? Please consider making them a gift to the Holocaust Center. Contact Pam Kancher at 407-628-0555.

SPOTLIGHT ON PHILANTHROPY

RIZWAN ZAMAN—WHY I GIVE

The word ‘philanthropist’ most easily brings to mind something like the cartoon image for the Monopoly game – the old guy with a top hat, white moustache and cane. In reality, though, philanthropists are men and women of all ages and backgrounds who support the organizations that make a difference.

Rizwan Zaman is a Board Member and strong supporter of the Holocaust Center’s programs. His own experiences and his family’s example — particularly his grandfather’s generosity — have played a role in his choice to be an activist and a donor.

“I was born in India where, unfortunately, there was a lot of poverty and suffering,” he said. “My grandfather seized every opportunity to help improve the situation.”

“As a practicing Muslim,” he added, “philanthropy is a deep rooted concept in my faith. We believe that the blessings we are bestowed by God are not 100% our own. There is a certain amount of our wealth and energy that belongs to the underprivileged.”

He also noted that education plays a vital role in his faith and in society as a whole, and that the Holocaust Center’s focus on education as a tool to end discrimination resonates with him.

“The Holocaust Center’s broad prospective of ‘acceptance and inclusion’ versus ‘tolerance’ gave me an intense personal connection to its purpose,” he said, “and investing in the future provides tangible benefits to philanthropists.”

He is particularly drawn to the Center’s UpStanders: Stand Up To Bullying initiative that uses the example of Holocaust heroes to educate students on how to respond to bullying. Rizwan says he was bullied as a child, and it had a long-term impact on his life.

“Whatsoever my experiences were, they brought me ‘full circle’....I can help bring about a change in society which I may not have had the same passion for otherwise. Having been through it, I am no longer a victim of bullying, but can be an advocate for those who are bullied. I am forever grateful for the Holocaust Center for creating such a unique and forward thinking program and allowing me to be a part of it.”

Rizwan Zaman is President/CEO of MD Back Office

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A VOTE: A VOICE – The Road to Voting Rights in Central Florida

by Geraldine F. Thompson

In the early 1980s, I participated in an oral history project which involved interviews with local African American pioneers such as Arthur “Pappy” Kennedy, Nap Ford, Mrs. Clifford Irene Wells and Dr. I. Sylvester Hankins, Jr. The names of these and other pioneers grace buildings, parks, streets, schools and other landmarks in Orlando’s historic African American community. The interviews were recorded on cassette tapes which I transcribed in 2002. I authored a book entitled, Black America: Orlando, Florida which was published by Arcadia Publishing Company in 2003. The book was based on the oral history interviews and photographs which were provided by those interviewed. The oral history project, and Black America: Orlando, Florida provide a retrospective on the struggle for civil rights in Orlando.

The voices of local African Americans who waged the war for civil rights in Orlando can be heard through the original stage play A VOTE: A VOICE which will be performed at 3:00 and 7:00 p.m. on February 22, 2015 at the Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts. In 2014, I wrote the script for A VOTE: A VOICE to provide the perspectives of those who lived during the civil rights struggle and made African American history. The voices of Orlando African American pioneers have been captured and will be presented in authentic portrayals during A VOTE: A VOICE. The stage play and supporting material will substantially broaden the knowledge base regarding individuals who were significant in the civil rights struggle and in African American history.

Many individuals are familiar with nationally-known figures who were involved in the civil rights struggle. Roughly a dozen names are recounted when most Americans are asked to identify individuals significant in African American history. Few of the names recounted are of individuals who worked in communities throughout America to help bring the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 to fruition. A VOTE: A VOICE will educate audience members regarding individuals described as “foot soldiers” who worked in tandem with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Rev. Ralph Abernathy, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Rosa Parks and others who were most visible during the civil rights struggle.

Documents, including taped interviews, historic photographs and artifacts, are now housed at and will be provided by the Wells’Built Museum of African American History and Culture to enhance the depth of the audience experience. Many parallels will be highlighted between the civil rights struggle and the broader human rights struggle that encompasses women’s rights, worker’s rights, jobs and justice. Historical information will be infused with the music and dance from the civil rights struggle augmented by theatrical portrayals of the Orlando foot soldiers of the civil rights era.

Anthony Major of the University of Central Florida will direct the cast and Vicki Elaine Felder, high school drama instructor, will cast dancers, soloists, and choirs which will perform during A VOTE: A VOICE. The stage play is presented by the Association to Preserve African American Society, History and Tradition, Inc. (PAST) which operates the Wells’Built Museum and the Wells Heritage House. PAST, Inc. offers A VOTE: A VOICE to celebrate and commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.
Mission Statement

The Holocaust Memorial Resource and Education Center of Florida is an organization dedicated to combating anti-Semitism, racism and prejudice with the ultimate goal of developing a moral and just community through its extensive outreach of educational and cultural programs. Using the lessons of the Holocaust as a tool, the Center teaches the principles of good citizenship to thousands of people of all ages, religions and backgrounds, each year.

Our Center is one of the oldest facilities of its kind in the nation. It houses permanent and temporary exhibit space, archives, and a research library. It is a nonprofit organization supported by tax-exempt donations, and is open to the public free of charge.