

Turning 25!

The Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies, 2007-2008

The academic year 2007-08 has been an extraordinarily rich year for the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies. Both the fall and spring semesters have been blessed with significant major events, beginning with the announcement of the College's first endowed academic chair, the Cohen Chair in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, on September 17, 2007. Later that evening the College hosted its 10th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture and kicked off a series of outstanding fall events. The spring semester, though competing with record snowfalls, offered an equally impressive array of programs and activities, with its major public events concentrated in the warmer days of April and May. The semester culminated with the debut performance of *Kaddish*, commissioned by the Cohen Center to commemorate its 25th anniversary and to lift up Chuck Hildebrandt's founding vision "to remember and to teach" the importance of the Holocaust and to face its continuing impact in the world. With special features throughout the year in the Keene Sentinel, Keene State College Today, and the prestigious state of New Hampshire Award for Excellence presented by the New England Board of Higher Education in March, the Cohen Center has also found its work and witness honored both locally and regionally in significant ways. It seems altogether fitting that the Annual Scholars Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches, the scholars gathering that inspired Prof. Hildebrandt's vision some 25 years ago, should come to Keene to hold its 38th annual meeting in conjunction with *Kaddish* and to join us in common cause *To Remember... and To Teach*.

An Eventful Year

Announcement of the Cohen Chair for Holocaust and Genocide Studies and the 10th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture – Sept. 17

The fall began with excitement as plans for unveiling the College's first endowed chair proceeded to coincide with the 10th annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture with scheduled speaker, Gerda Weissmann Klein. The new chair: The Cohen Chair for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Ten days before the big event, Mrs. Klein underwent emergency surgery and we began to scramble for a substitute. Two were found – Ernie Michel, a survivor from New York City and Hubert Locke, a retired Holocaust scholar from Seattle, Washington. The subsequent event, with the announcement of the new position, a celebratory dinner, and the Memorial Lecture given by two excellent speakers drew a crowd of approximately 500 and enthusiastic appreciation for the evening's program.

1st Annual Genocide Awareness Lecture – Oct. 22

Fittingly, the first speaker for this new series, which extends the Cohen Center's focus to include genocide, was former Ambassador Peter Galbraith, who earlier in his career taught courses in Political Science at KSC as an adjunct professor. Galbraith, former ambassador to

Croatia and an adviser to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on matters pertaining to Iraq and the region is currently the Senior Diplomatic Fellow at the Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation. He spoke on “Preventing Genocide in the 21st Century: Lessons from Iraq, Bosnia, and East Timor.” Again, a crowd of about 500 turned out for a timely engagement with these important issues and entering into thoughtful dialogue with the Ambassador through the question and answer period that followed the lecture.

City-Wide *Kristallnacht* Commemoration – Nov. 8

Over 600 persons attended the city-wide commemoration of *Kristallnacht* with its emphasis on community watchfulness and responsibility for the welfare of others. The city of Keene demonstrated its commitment with participation from community leaders from city schools and government officials like Mayor Blastos, Police and Fire Chiefs Walker and Lamoureaux, taking part in the event. And in the days leading up to the event, 47 local merchants placed posters and candles in their store windows to express their solidarity with this observance. This year’s event welcomed Congressman Tom Lantos and his wife, Annette, as featured speakers along with other distinguished guests who participated in the program.

Community Teach-In – Welcoming the Other: The Difficulty Work of Hospitality – Dec. 6

The unexpected news of a local fundraiser at Keene State College by the traditionalist Catholic community associated with the St. Benedict Center in Richmond, NH raised interesting questions about the dynamics of our relationships with those whose commitments do not match our own. In anticipation of the fundraising event, the Cohen Center joined with several local religious and college organizations in hosting an open conversation on the nature and practice of hospitality in a community that respects and values the other. Students, especially, engaged in thoughtful reflection on the nature of their community and the importance of making room for difference and respecting diversity without losing one’s sense of meaning and purpose. Over 200 people participated in this “conversation-in-the-round.”

Lecture Co-sponsored by Department of English and the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies – Chris Bigsby, Arthur Miller and the Holocaust: How Jewish Was He? – April 10

The Cohen Center teamed with the Department of English to co-sponsor this year’s Janet Grayson Lecture featuring British scholar, Christopher Bigsby. Bigsby, Prof. of American Studies at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, England is a noted scholar of Arthur Miller and the author of numerous books, among them his recent work, *Remembering and Imagining the Holocaust: The Chain of Memory* (2006). His talk, “How Jewish Is He? Arthur Miller and the Holocaust” was supplemented by a class visit in HOLO 399 – Religion and Violence” (taught by H. Knight) and a departmental conversation the Tuesday following Bigsby’s visit and lecture.

US Holocaust Memorial Museum Trip – April 11-13

The Cohen Center sponsored its 8th spring student trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on April 11 -13, 2008. 43 students from all three divisions of the college were joined by the Director of the Cohen Center, the Center's administrative assistant, two faculty members, and a representative of College Relations. The trip provides students, especially, an opportunity to visit and experience the museum for a first-hand encounter with its artifacts and other exhibits thereby enhancing our students understanding of this threshold moment in modern civilization.

11th Annual Charles Hildebrandt Holocaust Studies Awards Presentation – April 14

The 11th annual Charles Hildebrandt Holocaust Awards Presentation was held on April 14, 2008 at the Recital Hall in the Redfern Performing Arts Center. Former Cohen Center Director, Paul Vincent spoke on *20,000 Children Shut Out: Congress and the Failure of US Refugee Policy after Kristallnacht* and Phillis Benay and Nona Fienberg presided in the presentation of six awards to eight recipients. Three each were presented to Keene State students Meagan Blais, Elinor Albin, and Heather Bowman. The middle school award went to Kelly Rittenhouse, Kim Jeffries, and Sabrina Shemet of Jaffrey Rindge Middle School; and community awards were made to Rob Hamel, a New Hampshire high school teacher and Cohen Fellow and Zoe Bordenet.

The Kaddish Project – May 3

The Kaddish Project, begun with the commissioning of an Oratorio written by composer Lawrence Siegel and with a broad-based network of community planning and educational projects, reached a high point with the debut performance of the composition on May 3, 2008 on the Keene State College campus. The event was preceded by a \$180-a-plate Gala Dinner, attended by approximately 500 guests from throughout the United States, including guests from London, England and Paris, France. The performance featured 15 movements drawn from the words of victims, perpetrators, and bystanders from the Holocaust, all given musical expression to frame the central litany of 2600 names selected to represent the countless others who perished with them under Nazi persecutors and their collaborators. Numerous committees worked for two years on the dinner and its accompanying events, a commemorative booklet, and a set of educational plans to supplement full and limited productions of *Kaddish* when it is performed elsewhere. In short, the Kaddish Project has been a process of active fund-raising for the Cohen Center and its mission "To Remember and to Teach." This coming fall, *Kaddish* will be performed in Minneapolis under the direction of Philip Brunelle and his company *Vocal Essence* and again in representative form on campus as the College begins celebrations of its centennial in early November.

The Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies Hosts 38th Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches – A Think Tank on *Questions from the Past, Concerns for the Future* – May 3-5

Paired with the Gala Dinner and Debut Performance of *Kaddish*, The Annual Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust was hosted by the Cohen Center for its 38th annual meeting. 30 scholars gathered for a two-day conversation on the future of the group that was the impetus for Chuck Hildebrandt's founding vision 25 years ago. In 1982, Chuck attended the 23rd Annual meeting of this group and was inspired to begin the Holocaust Resource Center at KSC using personal funds to begin building a library on the topic. This year, the conference gathered to chart its course for the future and to wrestle with continuing issues related to the study of the Holocaust and related concerns. As a consequence of that gathering, the Cohen Center is now better known among established Holocaust scholars and has already received gifts of books from participating scholars wanting to have their material represented in the Cohen Center's holdings.

Educational Outreach

Cohen Center Coordinator of Educational Outreach, Tom White was active in numerous ways representing the Cohen Center and guiding its educational outreach to the local, regional community and beyond. Tom made 66 visits to area schools or community organizations making presentations to over 4600 people during the year. He coordinated five professional and personal development workshops focused on the theme, *What Does It Mean to Be Human? Personal Choice in a Universe of Moral Obligation*. Among the guest presenters were scholars Alan Rosen (Bar Ilan University and Yad Vashem) and Victoria Barnett (USHMM), as well as activist Gretchen Steidle Wallace (Global Grassroots). Some 132 people attended the workshops held in Bedford, Keene, and Dartmouth. In addition, the Cohen Center Web Site, which Tom White maintains, continues to receive steady use and improvement. With the help of Michael Justice in College Relations, the Center introduced a Cohen Center Blog in the fall to extend our commitment to fostering open-ended engagement and conversation as components of our public events. We continue to experiment with that.

Other significant forms of outreach in the community included developing local partnerships with Cheshire TV (e.g., broadcasting replays of the city-wide *Kristallnacht* commemoration, the film *Eagles Over Auschwitz* to mark the observance of the United Nations' Holocaust Remembrance Day, January 27) and the Colonial Theater in Keene (e.g., the production and discussion of a play about the Kindertransports, *My Heart in a Suitcase*). And, of course, a central manifestation of our partnerships with the community is embodied in our annual commemoration of *Kristallnacht*, utilizing the talents and cooperation of numerous community volunteers, civic officials, and downtown merchants. In fact, we are pleased to announce that next year's observance will move from the Keene Middle School Larracey Auditorium to the Colonial Theater in the heart of downtown Keene.

Other important partnerships occur on our own campus. During the campus-wide Citizenship Forum that occurred the first week in November, the Cohen Center joined in hosting Ivan Backer as a speaker in the 5th Biennial World Affairs Symposium. Backer, a child survivor of the

Holocaust was rescued by Nicholas Winton as a passenger in one of the Kindertransports in 1939. Backer was joined by Congressman Lantos as the two survivors brought their experiences to bear on the meaning of citizenship in our time in the 21st century. In addition, other campus partnerships have linked the Cohen Center with colleagues in Psychology in the hosting of the Teach-In, in Film Studies in recording an interview with survivor Ernie Michel, in music and graphic arts with *Kaddish* – just to name a few of the many partnerships that distinguish the Cohen Center’s work with colleagues on campus.

Financial Update

During FY2008 the College provided the Cohen Center with a budget of \$223,925, of which \$210,975 was earmarked for salaries, wages, and benefits. The remaining \$12,950 was used to support book purchases, travel and conferences, supplies, and the activities of the educational outreach coordinator, as well as to cover some of the Center’s overhead costs (e.g., telephone and internet costs). As of April 8, 2008 the Center received donations in the amount of \$53,482 in FY2008. Of this amount, \$39,093 was designated for general operations. The remainder went to support the Hildebrandt Awards, the Holocaust Memorial Lecture , the Kristallnacht fund, and the Burton F. Nelson Memorial Scholarship fund established through a personal donation by Director Paul Vincent.

Library Collection and Resources

The Center houses a wide range of materials including, as of May 2008, a total of 5,386 book and serial volumes, as well as 415 videos and 168 periodical titles. Recent acquisitions include 31 purchases (24 books, 7 videos) made possible by a donation from Bruce Levine Mellion and a gift from Franklin and Marcia Sachs Littell of their publications and volumes from past gatherings of the Annual Scholars Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches. In addition, noted scholar and author, Richard L. Rubenstein, has pledged a substantial donation from his private library.

Community Recognition

The Cohen Center received special recognition for its work in several ways this past year. The local paper, *The Keene Sentinel* provided generous coverage throughout the year, featuring stories on several lectures, and the Kaddish Project. Likewise *Keene State Today* ran a feature story on the Cohen Center as it turned 25 and a separate piece on composer Larry Siegel and *Kaddish*. And in March, the New England Board of Higher Education recognized the work of the Cohen Center with the presentation of one of its six New England state awards for excellence, The NEBHE State Merit Award for the state of New Hampshire. Timely articles also appeared in the campus newspaper, *The Equinox*, highlighting the Center’s ongoing work as well as special events like *Kaddish*. In addition, the May issue of *Yankee Magazine* featured a short story on *Kaddish* while New Hampshire Public Radio promoted and covered the event. And just ten days before *Kaddish*, the Keene State College Concert Band honored the Cohen Center with a concert dedicated to our 25th anniversary.

Newsletter

Two editions of the Center's newsletter were published and distributed to the Center's mailing list. The reach of the list grew from 1400 to 2700 due to *Kaddish*.

Assessment

The Cohen Center is engaged in the threefold educational praxis of commemoration, critical conversation, and active engagement of its immediate environment in order to understand and face the impact of the Holocaust in modern life generally and in our immediate context more particularly.

Its work therefore includes curricular embodiment at KSC but extends to include co-curricular expressions of the College's mission to its students and community partners.

That work includes the cultivation of a sense of personal and public responsibility as a general call to informed citizenship in a post-Holocaust world and extends to engage other expressions of genocidal activity that confront us on an ongoing basis. We envision this praxis model as an ongoing process that we can represent both in narrative and matrix forms. The appended assessment matrix was developed as part of the College-wide emphasis on assessment for identifying Cohen Center program objectives and corresponding learning outcomes for students and others served by the Center and its sponsored programs.

Looking Ahead

4th Biennial Summer Institute – July 13-19, 2008

The Cohen Center will hold its 4th summer institute from July 13-July 19 on the campus of Keene State College. Thirty-three participants have registered and represent 4 states with two visitors coming from Slovakia and two from Israel. This summer's keynote speaker will be Sibylle Niemoeller von Sell, widow of Pastor Martin Niemoeller. Other speakers will include Martin Rumscheidt, Stephen Lewy, Thomas Weisshaus, and Ernie Michel – among other local resources from the Keene State faculty.

11th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture – September 22, 2008

The 11th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture features historian Christopher Browning, the Frank Porter Graham Prof of History at the University of North Carolina. Prof. Browning's topic: "Holocaust Denial in the Courtroom: The Historian as Expert Witness." Browning is known for his groundbreaking book, *Ordinary Men* and for his role as expert witness in the libel defense of Deborah Lipstadt when she was sued by Holocaust denier David Irving.

2nd Annual Genocide Awareness Lecture – October 27, 2008

The 2nd Annual Genocide Awareness Lecture will be given by Professor Donald Bloxham, an expert in Holocaust and genocide studies with focused work on the Armenian

genocide. During the academic year 2007-08, Bloxham was the J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum for 2007-2008.

Facing the Holocaust – Honoring 25 Years of the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies – Nov. 7 – Dec. 9, 2008

The Thorne-Sagenthorpe Art Gallery will host a special exhibit of art commemorating the work and witness of the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies. Featuring the work of painter Samuel Bak and photographers Leslie Starobin and Clemens Kalischer.

***Kristallnacht* Commemoration – November 6, 2008**

This year's city-wide commemoration of *Kristallnacht* features a visit by Pierre Sauvage, Emmy Award winning filmmaker and President of the Chambon Foundations. Born while his parents were being sheltered in the village of *Le Chambon sur Lignon* in southwestern France, Sauvage owes his life in a unique way to the courage of the villagers of this region.

A Big Thank You and a Fond Farewell

Sadly, the Cohen Center must bid Administrative Assistant, Theresa Masiello, “farewell” as she completes an outstanding year of coordinating the multiple activities of our office. She returns to her career in banking after a year of helping the Cohen Center do great things as it turned 25. In that short time, Theresa made her mark with students, professors, colleagues and clients of the Center as well as with programs and activities that reflect her deep commitments to all that the Cohen Center stands for. All of us – staff and friends of the Cohen Center – will miss her. We thank her and wish her well.

Appendix

Objectives of Center	Learning Outcomes	Outcomes Achieved?
<p>1. To provide timely educational opportunities and resources for students, educators, civic organizations and other individuals in Holocaust and genocide studies while distinguishing the unprecedented nature of the Holocaust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and others will participate in educational activities provided by the Center and its partners, demonstrating their capacities to relate the topics at hand to the impact of the Holocaust in their lives. • Students and others will utilize the physical and personal resources of the Center to engage in Holocaust education and genocide awareness. 	
<p>2. To encourage community responsibility through commemoration of the Holocaust.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and others will participate in regular community activities that commemorate the Holocaust and other genocidal actions and draw lessons for the present and future. 	
<p>3. Develop, support and expand a network of learning partnerships while promoting sustained conversation about living responsibly in a post-Holocaust world.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and others will draw on the perspectives of others to extend their personal circle of awareness and their involvement in the community. • Students and others will utilize existing partnerships and build new ones in promoting their understanding of post-Holocaust responsibility. 	
<p>4. Engage our local and regional community in recognizing and responding to antisemitism (and similar prejudice) in its various manifestations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and others will grow in their capacities to recognize and confront the disdain for difference while promoting respect and cooperation in their embraces of diversity. (Students and others will support the dignity of others through their words and actions.) • Students and others will better understand how the use and abuse of power, and the roles and responsibilities of individuals, organizations, and nations when confronted with human rights violations and/or policies of genocide. 	
<p>5. Develop public awareness and promote civic responsibility to prevent, deter and respond to genocide.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and others will be active interpreters of the world around them. • Students will value engagement in various forms and venues. • Students and others will develop a process 	

	for exercising their own strategies.	
<p>6. The Center will maintain access to current scholarship on the Holocaust and genocide studies.</p> <p>7. The Center will maintain up-to-date resources for teaching and exploring issues related to the Holocaust and genocide awareness.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students and other members of the KSC community will utilize the people, books, journals, and other resources housed in the permanent collection of the Center for their educational needs and goals. • Cohen Center fellows and area teachers will utilize the resources of the Center to support their efforts to educate about the Holocaust and other genocidal activities in the world. • CCHS staff will monitor the permanent collection and keep it up to date. • CCHS staff will enhance their scholarship and understanding of Holocaust and genocide studies through regular participation in conferences, workshops, and other forms of continuing education. 	