



Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies

KEENE STATE COLLEGE
229 MAIN STREET
KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE
03435-3201

From Jan Cohen, Chair of the Development Committee

Dear Friends of the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies,

Greetings and a hearty "thank you" in advance from all of us at the Center! Your past support has been invaluable in sustaining our mission here at Keene State College.

Before us is a tremendous opportunity both to grow regionally and to expand the Center's mission by including courses in genocide studies to complement our current commitment to Holocaust education. To that end, a new Development Committee was established this spring to assist in seeking additional support for the Center. We are challenged on several levels: the rapid growth of the Center's activities, the expansion of its collections, a thriving educational outreach program to new schools, a heightened interest in the College's minor in Holocaust Studies, and the dramatic growth of our programming. Such positive and important change incurs a greater need for your support. While most staffing costs fall within the College's operating budget, program and material costs are funded primarily through the generosity of your donations.

As Chair of the new Development Committee, I request your help in our efforts to strengthen the Cohen Center so that it

continues to provide outstanding programs and resources for students and teachers throughout New Hampshire, northwestern Massachusetts, and southeastern Vermont. Learning about the Holocaust and recognizing the roots of genocide are increasingly important for our country's youth as they prepare to interact with an often complex and divisive world.

Finally, please look carefully through the newsletter to learn about our Memorial Lecture, the *Kristallnacht* Remembrance, and the quarterly Teacher Workshops offered as part of our educational outreach program. Forthcoming newsletters will also highlight the Hildebrandt Awards Contest and our biennial Summer Institute on the Holocaust. Feel free to contact me or any of the Center's staff. We would be happy to meet with you.

Please join my family and me in support of our effort – "to remember . . . and to teach."

Warmest thanks,

P.S. Stay tuned for exciting news about a world premiere event commemorating the Center's 25th anniversary in the spring of 2008!



THE NEWSLETTER OF THE

Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies

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"To Remember...and to Teach"



Antisemitism – The Focus of Our Labors

Earlier this year, at the Scholars' Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches, Rabbi Steven Jacobs remarked that "we shouldn't be so focused on the

Holocaust of the past that we fail to see the genocide of the present." The Cohen Center is taking this statement to heart.

In the past twenty years the world has witnessed Saddam Hussein's slaughter of more than one hundred thousand Kurds, the mass murder by Bosnian Serbs of some two hundred thousand Muslims and Croats, the Hutu attempt in 1994 to eliminate the Tutsi in Rwanda (over 800,000 Tutsi were murdered in scarcely ninety days), efforts at ethnic cleansing in Kosovo – a NATO bombing campaign in 1999 brought that to an end by liberating 1.7 million Albanians from Serb rule – and, currently, the genocidal brutality of Sudan's Arab population against the black Africans in that country's Darfur region. Should we fear that "never again" means only that "never again will Jews be murdered by Nazis in Europe in the 1940s?" If the Holocaust served as precedent for humanity's genocidal depravity, then the Cohen Center must broaden its focus, and perhaps its name, to address genocide as a "clear and present danger."

Yet, as the Center wrestles with the intellectual and practical hurdles attached to broadening its mission, we wish to underscore the ongoing centrality to our work of Holocaust Studies. The Holocaust will remain the focus of our studies and educational labors. For, while we may address the Holocaust as a historic event with a distinct beginning and end, we know that the poison generating this greatest of crimes was not eradicated in 1945 in the ruins of Berlin.

"Antisemitism" is so amorphous a term as to elude easy definition. In undergraduate courses I generally restrict its application to the last 130 years, a period in which the concept of nationalism blossomed and antagonism toward Jews took on an ethnic or racial dimension. (The term "antisemitism" was coined in 1879 to capture a non-religious enmity toward Jews.) Of course, anti-

Judaism or Judeophobia has a far longer pedigree, dating back at least to the Middle Ages, if not the period of the Roman Empire. What sets this enmity apart from all other forms of xenophobia is the belief, more widely ascribed today than some admit, that Jews exercise an evil influence that is omnipotent, ruthless, and universal. The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a forged Russian document from the early twentieth century that purports a sophisticated and satanic international Jewish conspiracy, is now widely printed and quoted in the Middle East.

We recognize that antisemitism has not dissipated. When criticism of Israel escalates to embrace all Jews, not simply Israelis; when a European poll ranks the tiny state of Israel as the country posing the greatest threat to world peace; when antisemitism serves as a central component of Arab cultural discourse; when well-educated Americans claim that Hollywood and the country's mass media are controlled by Jews; when these facts coalesce, we must admit that antisemitism remains real and dangerous. Thus, as we explore expanding our vision to encompass a universal study of genocide, we do so with a determination not to sever our roots. So long as antisemitism infects the planet and threatens our society, the Cohen Center will look to the era of Nazi Germany for historical lessons. We owe this to Hitler's victims; we owe it to the health of our community.

– C. Paul Vincent, Director

Our Mission

The Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies at Keene State College is a non-sectarian organization dedicated to teaching the facts and lessons of the Holocaust, motivating successive generations to recognize and respond to prejudice and hatred.

Our Vision

The Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies at Keene State College will lead in teaching and preserving the moral legacy of the victims of Nazi Germany. The Center challenges individuals to confront the responsibilities of their own humanity in order to respond effectively to intolerance and injustice.

Memorial Lecture

“German Corporate Complicity and the Holocaust”

“You could have heard a pin drop,” one attendee said later, “during Prof. Hayes’s lecture.” Such was the rapt attention garnered by Peter Hayes, the Theodore Zev Weiss Professor of Holocaust Studies at Northwestern University, during the Cohen Center’s 8th annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture on Monday, Sept. 26, in Keene State’s Mabel Brown Room. Hayes also presented his lecture the previous day at Manchester’s Derryfield School.

Speaking before an audience of over 300 people, Hayes began by underscoring a common misconception about “ordinary Germans” in 1933. At the point when Hitler came to power in 1933, Germany’s corporate leaders rubbed shoulders with Jews – indeed, were friendly and sometimes had familial connections with Jews, several of whom served effectively and loyally on the managerial and supervisory boards of key firms. Yet, by 1944, operating in an increasingly state-directed economy, most business managers had progressively dismissed both their Jewish officers and employees, participated in the increasingly brazen takeover of Jewish-owned firms, and, once World War II had begun, degenerated to the use of Jewish slave laborers and collaborated, often knowingly, in the murder of tens of thousands of innocent people.

Was the “progression” the result of inherent antisemitism? Only rarely, claims Hayes. Too often moved by “loyalty to secondary principles” – for example, stockholder interests, the competitive needs of the firm, personal advancement, patriotic sentiment – executives increasingly ignored the shared humanity of fellow board members, company employees, competitors, and, ultimately, an entire ethnic group. In time, “ordinary men” – in this case, business executives – adopted the regime’s antisemitic prejudices to justify their actions. What one saw, Hayes argues, was “the inversion of ethics, the collapse of moral values, and the increasing use of antisemitic language to excuse brutality.”

If this “inversion of ethics” served to legitimate their behavior during the war, it led to self-pity and lame justifications in its aftermath. Tragically, relatively few corporate leaders resisted the economic demands of Nazi Germany. They did, nonetheless, resist paying restitution to those whose lives they helped destroy. The process by which honorable and God-fearing men were reduced in a few years to the worst sort of criminal behavior should serve as a depressing warning to all of us.

– C. Paul Vincent

Faculty Commentary



Film, Social Injustice, and the Holocaust

by Larry Benaquist, Professor of Film Studies

When Paul Vincent approached me to join a group in conceptualizing the Holocaust Studies minor, I had just finished co-producing a film on a civil-rights activist from Keene, Jonathan Daniels, who died in Alabama saving the life of a young woman, also a civil rights worker. Working on the film introduced me to dozens of people who committed themselves to righting a social injustice, and interviewing them left a strong impression. They had changed history by being involved in one of the greatest social justice movements of the twentieth century.

I knew that the Second World War was often fought on the screens of movie theaters, as well as on the battlefield, and that film had helped the Nazis solidify their power. Leni Riefenstahl’s *Triumph of the Will* convinced many throughout the world that the Nazi movement was irresistible. Within Germany, I knew that antisemitic films such as *Jud Süß* and *Der ewige Jude (The Eternal Jew)*, both appearing in 1940, had helped poison the minds of millions of Germans. Joining a Holocaust reading group gave me the necessary background to place film in its proper context.

I am currently working on a documentary recounting the life of Martha Sharp Cogan, wife of a Unitarian minister who devoted much of her life to assisting Jews trapped in Hitler’s Europe. After the war, she became co-founder of Children to Palestine and a tireless fundraiser for the cause of a Jewish homeland. Martha was an undercover operative for Israel, going into Baghdad and Morocco in the late 1940s to determine the medical needs of Jews residing in those countries and unable to leave. When I began working on the Martha Sharp Cogan film project with Bill Sullivan, KSC professor emeritus of English, neither of us realized how central was the Holocaust to her work and life. I now see that it was the defining event in her life. The issue of rescuers – those who faced evil at great risk to their own lives – is of great interest to me. Where does such courage come from? Out of the evil and horrors of the Holocaust emerges the nobility of the few. There is value in remembering that there are such people in the world.

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In recognition of their birthdays, wedding anniversaries, and other celebratory occasions.
Janice Etscovitz's Bat Mitzvah
David Levy
Lara Weller & Mike Gleason's Wedding Guests

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Book Review



Strauss, Herbert A. *In the Eye of the Storm: Growing up Jewish in Germany, 1918-1943.* New York: Fordham University Press, 1999.

Any autobiographical account by a Jew of life in Nazi Germany must embrace torment and tragedy. Certainly, these feature in the story of Herbert Strauss. The author is forced from secondary school (*Gymnasium*) short of obtaining his degree; his father loses his business and, on trumped-up charges, is imprisoned and eventually murdered; many of his closest friends and teachers vanish without a trace. Ultimately, facing deportation and death, he and his future wife lose themselves in Berlin's underground and, eventually, escape into Switzerland. The traumatic story is expertly told.

Yet, *In the Eye of the Storm* is path-breaking because of what it tells the reader of life in "pre-Holocaust" (the author's expression) Nazi Germany. Strauss, who as an 18-year-old moved in 1936 from Würzburg to Berlin, began studies at the highly regarded – among Jews – *Hochschule für die Wissenschaft des Judentums* (roughly, "Institute for Scholarship in Jewish Studies"). A sophisticated institution devoted to objective instruction, the Hochschule experienced a renaissance during the five semesters Strauss attended its classes. This paradox requires explanation. Due to Nazi decrees in 1933 and 1935 (the last following the Nuremberg Laws), thousands of Jewish professors lost their academic appointments in what Strauss calls "the greatest brain drain of German intellectual history." Because the Nazis cared little about the ideological cohesion of a Jewish institution, the Hochschule benefited and dramatically expanded its Judaistics faculty while adding courses in Arabic, Assyrian, Ethiopian, Syrian, and Egyptian hieroglyphics, together with a three-semester sequence on Islamic history and culture.

But this was not all. Conjuring up innocuous titles so as not to attract the Gestapo, the Hochschule added a Division of General Scholarship and provided new offerings in Greek and Roman history; Greek, Latin, and Hellenistic literature;

general European history and historiography; history of religion; theories of government; and the history of Eastern Europe. The Hochschule enveloped itself in a marvelous yet all-too-vulnerable cocoon wherein faculty and administrators devised long-term instructional programs and students charted their academic futures. But the flush of freedom and possibility enriched the mind while numbing the senses. Together with Strauss, most participants remained "miserably ignorant of the danger" facing them. "Neither I nor most of my friends were alert enough to read the signs right," Strauss remarks. The great majority, teachers and students, paid for their naiveté with their lives.

Historians, it is said, are "blessed" with twenty-twenty hindsight. It is a quality that we should hold in abeyance. If one reads *In the Eye of the Storm* empathetically, one must come away appreciating the author's inextricable coupling of stark terror and uncommon promise. And Strauss, it should be noted, survived the war and became one of the most admired and respected historians of Jewish life under the Nazis.

– C. Paul Vincent

Forthcoming Events

Kristallnacht Remembrance
Wednesday, November 9, 2005, 7 p.m.
Charles Larracey Auditorium, Keene Middle School

9th Annual Charles Hildebrandt Holocaust Studies Awards Program/ Yom HaShoah Commemoration
Monday, April 10, 2006, 7:30 p.m.
Redfern Arts Center on Brickyard Pond, Keene State College

2006 Summer Institute on the Holocaust
Sunday, July 9, to Saturday, July 15, 2006
Keene State College
(call 603-358-2746 or e-mail twhite@keene.edu)

9th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture
Wolf Kahn, artist and refugee from Nazi Germany
"Growing up Privileged, and Jewish, under Hitler"
Monday, September 18, 2006, 7:30 p.m.
Mabel Brown Room, Keene State College

Interview with a Cohen Center Fellow



James Trill teaches social studies at Pioneer Valley Regional School in Northfield, Mass. He has been active in the Center's activities for many years and is a graduate of the 2004 week-long Cohen Center Summer Institute for Teachers at Keene State College. Jim has

been involved in Tom White's workshop series and created a three-hour "Holocaust Remembrance Museum Evening" at his school, attended by more than 300 people. "It was an extremely powerful event that took our breath away," Jim said. "As a teacher I was extremely proud of the way our students conducted themselves during a difficult and emotional evening."

How did you become interested in Holocaust studies?

Coming from England, I was immersed in the subject of World War II and its horrific actions. The Holocaust occurred "in our backyard"; it is a subject that rightly receives considerable attention in the curriculum. Upon moving to the United States, I was shocked that an event of such magnitude received little or no attention. I understand that many events in history demand our attention; however, I was disappointed at just how little attention the Holocaust garnered.

What has been the impact of Holocaust studies on you and your students?

More than ever, today's events challenge students, educators and the wider community to investigate the causes of atrocities such as genocide. Even though we are far from most trouble spots, advances in technology bring such events up close, enabling us to access the most horrific details. Through research we can discover links between the Holocaust and some of the tragedies happening in today's world. We are also discovering our voices and finding ways to be active in preventing or, at minimum, intervening. We should not be bystanders. We want to tell the world how we feel.

How has the Center benefited you?

The Cohen Center is a great sounding board, staffed by extremely knowledgeable people who are willing to help. I simply ask and somebody is on hand to guide me with my research or visit my school to provide additional educational opportunities for classes or staff. The Cohen Center provides links to

many of the key learning institutions across the world, opening doors to thousands of valuable historical collections. The Center has numerous resources, books, videos, DVDs, and lesson plans as well as online sources. Teachers can attend interesting and informative workshops, often presented by people who survived the Holocaust. These workshops provide a great opportunity to get up close and ask those important questions that provide the means for informing students.

Has our affiliation with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous helped your work?

The JFR extends and builds on what we receive from the Cohen Center, presenting us with numerous opportunities for development and sharing, and helping us build lifelong relationships that support us as we strive to find answers to those challenging questions asked by our students. The JFR Summer Institute [at Columbia University] was a powerful week that brought together some of the most dedicated professionals in our field of education. The connection between the JFR and the Cohen Center reinforces the point that our role goes beyond educating students in this local area. Our job is to join colleagues across the world in an effort to strengthen the resolve of governments and agencies that *can* make a difference. I must also add that the staff at JFR is amazing—they are so caring and knowledgeable. It was a pleasure spending the week with Stanlee Stahl and her staff.

How would you summarize the importance of what you do?

Teaching our students to understand, to forgive, to make their voices heard, to stand up and fight for what is right; these are values that are high on my agenda.



"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." – Martin Luther King Jr.

It has been a time of natural and man-made disasters. We witness the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina and genocide in Darfur, Sudan. We remember the fourth anniversary of 9/11 as well as other terror attacks in Spain and England. In Keene, we confront for the first time in recent memory the targeting of neighborhoods and the synagogue with antisemitic, homophobic, and racist leaflets. Our Jewish friends in New Hampshire and elsewhere in New England experience similar hate literature as well as graffiti. Is it a time to despair? How can the Center's work fulfill the charge of its founder, Chuck Hildebrandt?

The Center's vision is to challenge individuals to confront the responsibilities of their own humanity in order to respond effectively to intolerance and injustice. How have we responded to this vision?

Hate literature. In response to the hate literature distributed in Keene, leaders of the community, including a Cohen Center Teaching Fellow, instantly rallied to show their solidarity against such propaganda. The *Keene Sentinel* and WMUR, Channel 9, from Manchester made this affirming demonstration their lead stories. When a few suggested that silence might be the proper response to such provocation, the silent example of the 1930s was immediately invoked. To paraphrase Elie Wiesel, silence only helped the oppressor, never the oppressed. I was heartened to hear people in a local gym and at Sunday mass telling me that our example helped them teach their children how best to respond to hatred. One old acquaintance sought me out to say "thank you," saying that we [Catholics] are finally standing with our Jewish brothers and sisters. We now know that silence is not the proper response.

Kristallnacht Remembrance. Wednesday, November 9, 2005, at 7 p.m. in the Keene Middle School auditorium. The Remembrance brings the entire Keene community together in a remarkable way, enabling participants to reflect upon the lessons of the Holocaust. The event illustrates how the Center confronts contemporary issues of prejudice, hatred, and genocide through remembering the Holocaust.

Hurricane Katrina. In response to the victims of Katrina, incredible efforts have been made through schools to send much-needed aid to the people suffering in the Gulf region. Sharon Nichols, director of the Holocaust and Human Rights Center of Maine, pointed out that people were following the example of those in the United Kingdom who, in the months preceding World War II, opened their hearts and homes to some of Germany's Jewish children. Approximately 10,000 children from Germany and recently annexed Austria arrived in Britain via *Kindertransport* and were saved from almost certain death.

Darfur. I have addressed audiences in places such as the White Mountains, Augusta, Maine, and Keene. My call has been for teachers and students to exert a "disruptive empathy" for the victims in Sudan and Chad – an approach developed by Rene Girard, a Catholic philosopher, in response to bystander behavior during the Holocaust. Student organizations have been created in response to my presentations to rally students to their responsibilities for the plight of "the other." Our web site gives students easy access to pertinent information on the crisis as well as ways to respond.

JONATHAN DANIELS – RESPOND TO "THE KNOCK AT THE DOOR"

We know from the Holocaust that when people were confronted with the knock at the door or some other circumstance eliciting their help, their response shaped the remainder of their lives. One either helped or withdrew. In this 40th anniversary year of the martyrdom of Keene's native son, Jonathan Daniels, I am reminded that our mission is to teach students not only what happened but also how to act in critical moments. We need students to confront their own humanity in order to respond effectively to intolerance and hatred. Thus, I am proud of our association with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous and indebted to the legacy of Jonathan Daniels.

In 1965, Jon Daniels, then an Episcopal seminarian, responded to the call of Martin Luther King by joining the civil rights movement in Alabama. He assisted the voter registration drive, marched from Selma to Montgomery, and worked with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in Alabama's Lowndes County.

On August 20, 1965, Tom Coleman, an unemployed highway worker, confronted Jon's group on the steps of Varner's Cash Store in Hayneville, Alabama. Coleman leveled his shotgun at sixteen-

year-old Ruby Sales. Instantly, Daniels pushed Sales out of the way and caught the gun's full blast. He died immediately.

Although Coleman was acquitted by a jury of twelve white men, Jon's sacrifice shocked the Episcopal Church into facing the reality of racial inequality. Jonathan Myrick Daniels was designated a martyr of the Episcopal Church, one of fifteen modern-day martyrs, and the Virginia Military Institute, where Daniels was an undergraduate, created the Jonathan Daniels Humanitarian Award in 1998 (former President Jimmy Carter has been another recipient).

Jon's sacrifice is important to the Center's work. We should illustrate examples of righteous behavior for our students to model. Evil flourishes only with our apathy. Few of us will be confronted as Jonathan was; his was a split-second decision of selfless love. Yet, we witness incidents each day that beg the same split-second response. How we react to the smallest injustice may impact the rest of our lives.

NEW SCHOLARSHIP CREATED

In an effort to encourage churches to confront antisemitism, the Cohen Center has established the **James H. White/Sibylle Sarah Niemoeller von Sell Fellowship for Clergy**. It provides full coverage for at least one clergyperson from our region to attend the biennial Scholar's Conference on the Holocaust and the Churches, the oldest-running Holocaust conference, which was established in 1970 and meets in various cities around the world. The fellowship honors Sibylle Sarah Niemoeller von Sell, widow of Martin Niemoeller, and the late James H. White.

CHECK OUT OUR WEB SITE

Lessons: New links lead to specific lessons for teachers, categorized for easy use and access (www.keene.edu/cchs/teacher-resources.cfm).

Kristallnacht: A new link guides you to the Center's remembrances.

Free presentations: Find a complete list at www.keene.edu/cchs/presentations.cfm

MEMORIAL LECTURE IN MANCHESTER

Our thanks to Glenda McFadden, Michele Thomas-Somers, and Kim Ziegler for representing the Center at Peter Hayes's lecture in Manchester.

2005 OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

During the 2005 calendar year, the Cohen Center presented programs at some 45 middle and high schools, colleges, and other settings. Some of the programs involved a screening of *Telling Their Stories*, the documentary about survivors who settled in New Hampshire. Other topics ranged from "The History of Antisemitism" to "The Origins of the Final Solution" to the work of Elie Wiesel. For a complete list of these programs, go to www.keene.edu/cchs.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS 2005-06

Workshops will take place in the Cohen Center in Keene State College's Mason Library from 9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. For more information please call 603-358-2746 or e-mail twhite@keene.edu.

November 18

Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred

Session 1: A history of Anti-Judaism

Session 2: Antisemitism

Session 3: Modern manifestations – local hate literature and Arab antisemitism

January 13

Anne Frank: Hope in the Shadow of the Holocaust

Author Spring Herman will explore the life of Anne Frank through the use of her book.

February 10

Gender Roles during the Holocaust

Dr. Thomas Kuehne, the Strassler Family Professor in the Study of Holocaust History at Clark University, will present some of his research, which concerns the relation of war, genocide, and society, with long-term traditions of the political culture of Central Europe

March 24

European Colonialism and the Road to Genocide

This workshop will explore Isabel Hull's book, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War in Imperial Germany*. The focus will be on pre-World War I German colonial behavior, especially genocide in Southwest Africa, and why other European countries, deeply engaged in similar behavior, were checked in their military ambitions of total destruction while the Germans were not.