



# Cohen Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies

Keene State College

Keene, New Hampshire

www.keene.edu/cchs

## Making Good Things Happen

### Forthcoming Events

**October 9, 2009**

**Confronting a Difficult Past**  
Holocaust scholar workshop  
Germans Wrestle with the  
Legacy of Nazism and the  
Holocaust, 9:00am to 3:30pm,  
Mabel Brown Room, Young  
Student Center  
\$85 registration fee required  
Lunch included

**November 9, 2009**

**Kristallnacht**  
Remembrance event  
Keynote address by Rabbi Leo  
Trepp. Choral, Dance, and  
other memorial activities.  
7pm, Colonial Theater, Keene

**December 11, 2009**

**Anguished Hope**  
Holocaust Scholar workshop  
Confronting the Palestinian-  
Israeli Conflict,  
9:00am to 3:30pm,  
Mountain View Room,  
Young Student Center  
\$85 Pre-registration fee required  
Lunch included

*Photo, Above Right: Pam Knight, Lorne Fienberg, Nona Fienberg, Stephanie Wolfe, and Randy Carmel explore Sam Bak's painting, Ellegy III at A Gathering of Friends held July 23 at the College Camp. Approximately 75 friends of the Cohen Center gathered for food, conversation, and to hear about the Cohen Center's programs for the coming year.*

In July the Cohen Center hosted a gathering of friends at our College Camp and invited our guests to ponder ways each of us can be catalysts for good things happening in our midst. Our conversation pointed to ways in which we tap the richness of our personal interests, talents, and commitments to making the worlds we share with each other more thoughtfully responsible. To that end, we invited everyone to consider ways we at the Cohen Center might join with our friends to foster catalytic partnerships and collaborative communities to tap the shared associations and distinctive communities we already represent.



Of course, in the world of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the phrase collaborative community can signal behaviors that enable people who diminish the humanity of others in acts of compromise and complicity. We intend a more constructive interaction. Our hope is to foster partnerships of various kinds that encourage increased regard for the other in our lives. As we know, disregard for others lies at the heart of the violence we explore in our study of the Holocaust and other genocides. antisemitism, racism more generally, and multiple forms of xenophobia are all ways we diminish the other in our lives and try to make the world in our own image. The result is a smaller, circumscribed existence that, while it may feel more secure for those inside its protected walls, divides the world into those who count and those who don't, those who are safe and those who are not, those with power and those

without. Facing that temptation wisely while we build partnerships that are otherwise constituted enables us to build a different kind of world that is mindful about its regard for others and the multiple ways in which it is

stitched together by the relationships we nurture and uphold.

As we at the Cohen Center move forward with another year of programs and activities, we invite our many friends to ponder ways we can be catalytic partners in building a world that makes room for others through the nurture

of mutual respect and understanding. Let us know what you are doing in this regard, especially where we can collaborate in making a difference for others. We have already heard from some of you who want to participate in this enterprise with us – either in your homes, at Keene State, or online in a digital vineyard we cultivate together. Consider hosting important conversations about books you have read and want to discuss with others, films you would like to discuss, paintings (and other visual arts) you would like to explore with the help of friends and other interpreters. Or suggest something none of us has thought of doing that would nonetheless make our worlds bigger and more responsible.

If we are going to build catalytic partnerships for the sake of responsible public life, one of the ways we can make that happen is by being catalysts with and for each other. Let us hear from you and help us make something good happen.

- Hank Knight

### **“To Remember... and to Teach”**

Henry Knight, Director • Thomas White, Educational Outreach Coordinator • Michele Kuiawa, Sr. Program Support Assistant  
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Gerda Weissmann Klein

## Standing Room Only for Gerda Weissman Klein

Gerda Weissmann Klein spoke to a crowd of nearly 800 on Monday night, Sept. 21, in the Keene State Student Center. There was standing room only on both floors of the Mabel Brown Room for the 12th Annual Holocaust Memorial Lecture. She began by telling the audience that in order to understand what happened to the victims of the Holocaust they must get behind the numbers. The challenge, she declared, is to identify with one person, "then multiply it in our heart." Speaking directly to the students in the audience, Gerda told them "you are messengers to a time I will not see." Gerda's challenging words give moving articulation to the Cohen Center's mission "to remember ... and to teach".

The lecture was preceded by a special reception hosted by the Cohen Center Fellows. CC Fellows are alumni of the week long Summer Institutes the Center offers for educators and other interested participants. The next Summer Institute is slated for July, 2011.



KSC President, Dr. Helen Giles-Gee welcomes a table of KSC Honor students who were reading Ms. Klein's book, *All But My Life* for their class with Professor Helen Frink.

## Holocaust Studies European Travel Seminar, June 7 – 18, 2010

The Cohen Center and the academic program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies are sponsoring a European Travel Seminar to Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic next June. This special tour is planned as an educational mission for friends of the Cohen Center and the College's new academic program. The trip is open to interested parties who want to learn more about our work by engaging in this in-depth experience. Participants will visit important Holocaust-related sites under the guidance of tour leaders Paul Vincent and Hank Knight. The ten-day travel seminar is limited to 30 participants. The cost is tentatively set at \$3300 per person inclusive of air and land expenses. A \$500 non-refundable deposit is required by Dec. 1, 2009 at which time our contracts will be finalized with exchange rates, taxes and fuel fees set. \$50 of the total fee secures travel insurance provided through the College's program in Global education.

We have reserved space for four KSC students to participate in the trip. To help offset their fees for the trip seminar participants are asked to consider an additional \$250 contribution to a student scholarship fund. This contribution would be tax-deductible.

Contact either Dr. Vincent (pvincent@keene.edu) or Dr. Knight (hknight@keene.edu) to express your interest or to explore questions you might have about this opportunity.

### Brief Itinerary

- Monday, June 7, 2010** – Evening departure from Boston, MA
- Tuesday, June 8, 2010** – Arrive Berlin
- Wednesday, June 9, 2010** – Berlin
- Thursday, June 10, 2010** – Travel by bus to Warsaw
- Friday, June 11, 2010** – Warsaw
- Saturday, June 12, 2010** – Treblinka then travel by bus to Lublin
- Sunday, June 13, 2010** – Travel by bus to Kraków
- Monday, June 14, 2010** – Kraków
- Tuesday, June 15, 2010** – Day trip to Auschwitz I and Birkenau
- Wednesday, June 16, 2010** – Travel by bus to Prague
- Thursday, June 17, 2010** – Prague/Theresienstadt
- Friday, June 18, 2010** – Morning departure to Boston

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## We Remember...

### Susan Herman

Last spring we lost a beloved friend of the Cohen Center, Susan Herman. Her husband, Gary Kofinas, and many friends, have established the Susan J. Herman Leadership Award in Holocaust and Genocide Awareness. As of September 29, we have received 114 gifts totaling \$14,014.47. Contributions continue to be received as Susan's friends and colleagues remember the difference she made in their lives. We join them in their gratitude and thank them for honoring Susan with their gifts. Persons wishing more information about the Susan J. Herman Award or instructions on how to contribute may visit [www.keene.edu/cchs/herman\\_award.cfm](http://www.keene.edu/cchs/herman_award.cfm).

### Officer Stephen Johns

June 10, 2009, the USHMM was attacked in a violent act of hatred in which security officer Stephen Johns lost his life protecting the lives of visitors to the museum. The Cohen Center staff, Advisory Council, and other friends joined in offering support to officer Johns' family in the symbolic form of individual checks written in the amount of \$18 (or multiples thereof) which were collected and sent as an expression of the Cohen Center's solidarity and support for the Museum, its staff, and the Johns family in the aftermath of this tragedy. We forwarded 18 separate contributions in the amount of \$606.

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## Friends At Work

In the spirit of the July 23 *Gathering of Friends* at the College Camp, Jane Shapiro has initiated Holocaust Studies-related activities with her book group. As a brand new member she invited her fellow readers to view the Nicholas Winton DVD, *The Power of Good*, and then read the book *The Zookeeper's Wife*. Her group then decided that they would attend the Kristallnacht event in November together. Bravo! to Jane for demonstrating how each of us can make good things happen in our own circles of influence.

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## A New Name and More...

On Sept. 21, 2009, the Cohen Center for Holocaust Studies officially became The Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The name change accompanies the college's implementation of its new academic program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, including a new major, a reworked minor, and the previously announced Cohen Chair in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. An active search for this new position will begin this fall with Paul Vincent and Hank Knight serving as co-chairs for the search.



*Michelle Sigiel, Meagan Blais and Taylor Mitchell meet with Dr. Paul Vincent to discuss their newly declared major in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Michelle and Meagan are the first two students to declare their majors in Keene State College's new interdisciplinary major in Holocaust and Genocide Studies.*

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## Thanks to Our Many Partners

Our recent appeals letter went out to our many friends around the country informing them of the exciting things taking place at Keene State in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. We are beginning to hear back from them as they respond with gifts large and small. Over 85 % of our program dollars are supported by these contributions. While we have limited endowments for which we are incredibly grateful, almost all our programs require supplementation by funds we raise from our annual appeal. Of course, this need also means that we have many invested partners in the work of the Cohen Center. If you are one of our many generous partners, we hope that the programs we offer and the difference we make together is as much a source of pride for you as it is for us. Thank you, from everyone at the Cohen Center.

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# From the Center Out

News from Outreach Coordinator Tom White

*"The whole purpose of education is to turn mirrors into windows."*  
–Sydney J. Harris

With the changing leaves and fresher autumn air we begin another year of opening our students' minds to the questions raised by our studies of the Holocaust and genocide. We seek to enrich their lives through a growing understanding of what is at stake when we become witnesses. We have a growing network of speakers, trained Fellows, and circles of friends who are wrestling with these topics. All of this brings hope. Thinking of the responsibility to memory and the need to embrace hope I would like to recommend some accessible and worthwhile readings for your own enrichment from my summer reading.

- *A Lucky Child: A Memoir of Surviving Auschwitz as a Young Boy* by Thomas Buergenthal. Hearing his interview on the Diane Rehm show en route to a presentation I could not wait to read this book. It did not disappoint. As a 10-year-old inmate in August 1944 at Birkenau, Buergenthal was one of the death camp's youngest prisoners. His survival and experiences reveals his lifelong commitment to human rights and allows the reader to embrace the duty to remember while embracing the hope that life gives.
- *Promises Kept: One Man's Journey Against Incredible Odds* by Ernest W. Michel. Ernie's visits to Keene gave many of us a cherished gift. His memoir reveals precious insights to his experiences both during and after the Holocaust. It will infuse the reader with a sense of hope while balancing the duty of memory.
- *The Hidden Life of Otto Frank* by Carol Ann Lee. A revealing look into the personal character and life of Otto Frank and his influence on his family and on their experiences. Some interesting research on a likely betrayer of the family. A worthwhile read for those who are teaching *The Diary of Anne Frank*.
- *The Shame of Survival* by Ursula Mahlendorf. I was moved by this surprising and fascinating discovery. Mahlendorf joined the Hitler Youth (BDM) and became a squad leader and ardent follower of Hitler. This book is a pointed and forthright wrestling with her postwar realization that as a young teen, she had been a bystander. If she had been old enough, would she have been a perpetrator? Her postwar journey leads her to accept her culpability in the Holocaust. I am pleased that she will be speaking at the Fall Workshop, *Confronting a Difficult Past* on October 9, 2009. For more, see the extensive review on page 7 of this newsletter.
- *Anguished Hope: Holocaust Scholars Confront the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict* by Leonard Grob (Editor), John K. Roth (Editor). An important collection of essays questioning what the study of the Holocaust can help us understand, or lead us to ponder, when we face the Palestinian-Israeli conflict attentive to its heavily-laden history and complex dynamics? I am pleased that both editors as well as two contributors to this text will be joining us for the Fall Workshop, *Anguished Hope* presented on December 11, 2009.

## New PowerPoint Presentations for the Classroom

- **Anne Frank – An Indestructible Voice**  
This presentation places Anne's Frank's voice and experiences within the historical context of her life. Special attention is given to the life of Otto Frank and the memories of Hannah (Goslar) Pick, Anne's childhood friend. The life and decisions of the Frank family (such as emigration and going into hiding) are placed within the context of the Nazi era. Otto Frank's failed attempt to get his two children (Margot and Anne) into the United States is highlighted. This presentation also traces the family's history after their betrayal in the Secret Annex.

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- **The United States and the Holocaust: Context and Memory**

A contextual examination of what the U.S. knew about the Holocaust and how it reacted. National policy is presented in context of the years of peace (1933-1939) and the years of war (1939-1945). Topics covered include: U.S. immigration policy and the quota system, U.S. attitudes of pacifism, isolationism, racism, xenophobia and antisemitism in the 1930s, Evian Refugee Conference, Voyage of the St. Louis; and the failed Wager-Rogers kindertransport bill. In addition, Allied knowledge and responses to the Holocaust is examined.

- **Holocaust Denial: Deceit and Distortion**

Holocaust denial is an active propaganda effort to deny the reality of the approximately 6 million victims of the Shoah. This presentation answers questions such as, "How do we know what we know?" "Who would deny the Holocaust and why?" The context and origins of Holocaust denial (initiated by the Nazis themselves) are presented as will be the role of the historian as witness. Fundamental denier motives, distortions and tropes are also examined. Using the documented facts of the Shoah, this presentation illustrates how denier arguments have no basis in truth.

For a complete listing of available presentations:  
<http://www.keene.edu/cchs/presentations.cfm>

## Honoring Dr. Rachel Margolis

On April 16, 2009, the Cohen Center teamed with Conant High School teacher Marjorie Margolis in honoring her cousin, Dr. Rachel Margolis. The event, "Resistance Continued: Courage in the Face of Adversity" brought public recognition of Rachel's experiences as a Holocaust survivor, Vilna ghetto partisan, and Holocaust scholar. In addition, it brought to light the current movement by Lithuanian prosecutors, urged on by an antisemitic press, to indict for "war crimes", heroic World War II era Jewish partisans for their anti-Nazi resistance. The Lithuanian Prosecutor general has been culling survivor memoirs, such as Rachel's, for evidence with which to prosecute or harass elderly Jewish partisans as "war criminals". The evening culminated in the showing of the film *Defiance*.

The Cohen Center website will be updated shortly with details from the event including: a list of dignitaries, letters and documents collected prior to the event, and a detailed overview of the current situation in Lithuania. Documents solicited by the Center affirming Rachel's courage, heroism, and witness were sent to her in Israel.

We are proud of the Cohen Center Fellows who act as a catalytic force to spread the mission of the Center, "To remember...and to teach".



Hank Knight, Marjorie Margolis, NH State Senator Molly Kelly, and Stephanie Hurley



Michele Kuiawa and Hank Knight

## Welcome Michele!

Michele Kuiawa joined the Cohen Center Staff on August 3 as Senior Program Support Assistant. Many at Keene State already know Michele from her work in Student Financial Services where she worked for the last 7 years. Prior to that she was the office manager of Surry Veterinary Hospital and held several positions at Monadnock Community Hospital, including medical librarian.

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## Archival Re-organization

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Mason Library Archivist Rodney Obien will be working with the CCH&GS to help organize the center's archives. The archives chronicle the history of the center from its inception in 1983 to the present. The holdings also include unique manuscript collections – such as the Walter A. Singer Collection. Graduate interns from the School of Library & Information Science at Simmons College (Boston, Mass.) will be recruited to assist with processing the collections. “It’s important that we make every effort to preserve the history of CCH&GS...”, says Obien, “particularly since its one of the oldest and most distinguished Holocaust studies centers in the United States.” The plan is to arrange, catalog, and re-house the archives based on standard archival practices. The plan is to also make the archives more accessible, via the Internet, for those interested in studying the history of the center and of the Holocaust studies movement.

## Summer Institute for Teachers Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

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**By Christina Hamilton**

Columbia University was an exciting place for three New Hampshire teachers this past July, myself included, when we were given the incredible opportunity to become Alfred Lerner Fellows with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. Through the support of the Cohen Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies at Keene State College, we attended this life-changing program of study with other Holocaust scholars from around the world. Whether studying with renowned professors or sitting down to dinner with Holocaust survivors and rescuers, our week at Columbia University enriched our knowledge and understanding of the Holocaust and ensured that we are able to pass that understanding on to our own students while equipping them with the skills to critically study the historic and global impacts of this era.

The mission of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous is to fulfill the traditional Jewish commitment to *hakarot hatov*, the searching out and recognition of goodness. In addition to educating teachers and students about the history of the Holocaust and rescue, the foundation provides financial assistance to aged and needy non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

During the week’s program, coordinated by JFR Executive Vice President Stanlee Stahl, scholars explored a wide scope of forums that included lectures on topics such as the inter-war period, refugee policy, Jewish life under German occupation, rescue, and life after the Holocaust. Lectures were presented by renowned historians and educators that included Roman Kent, a Holocaust survivor and Vice Chairman of the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. Each lecture was followed by an in-depth question and answer session before scholars were divided into groups to discuss ideas about how to apply the knowledge to their teaching. Scholars from places around the world – Croatia, Poland, Texas, Alabama, and New Hampshire to name a few – enthusiastically shared ideas and insight for how to best create passionate and effective lessons so that future generations will learn the history and lessons of the Holocaust.

It is the rare experience that changes not only the way one teaches but the way one lives her life. I was fortunate to be part of such an experience this summer with the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous. The lessons I learned that week, whether from a middle school teacher from Alabama or a concentration camp survivor, will remain with me forever.

To find out more about the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, visit the organization’s website at [www.jfr.org](http://www.jfr.org).



*Alfred Lerner Fellows; Erin Bouton (Dublin School), Christina Hamilton (Hampton Academy), Deb Curran (Amherst Middle School)*

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## Book Review

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Ursula Mahlendorf: *The Shame of Survival; Working Through a Nazi Childhood* (Penn State, 2009).

Why would a ten-year-old girl join the Hitler Youth movement, embracing its racist ideology and ardent support of the Nazi regime? Ursula Mahlendorf's engrossing memoir leads us into this enigma.

Born in 1929 into a middle-class Silesian family, Mahlendorf felt inferior to her older brother, and fought to continue her education beyond the eight grades considered adequate for future Aryan wives and mothers. Keenly aware of her gendered inferiority, she struggled for social superiority over the children of communist workers in a nearby granite quarry. Emotionally distant from her widowed mother, she found a sense of belonging to a larger cause in the Jungmädel (for girls 10-14), and later in the Bund deutscher Mädchen. She took little notice of the public humiliation or deportation of Jews, recalling merely the destruction of her dentist's office on Kristallnacht. As the BDM became the locus of her education, leisure, and friendships, she competed in athletics, advanced to squad leader, and finally won admission to a teaching academy created to train young women when male teachers were drafted. The academy's students were soon requisitioned as nurses, first in a maternity ward whose mothers rejected their starving infants; later she realized this must have been a Lebensborn clinic.

Mahlendorf "scrapbooked" along with Nazi victories, yet stubbornly ignored mounting defeats, until the Russian army swept through Silesia. She recalls with excruciating guilt leaving a younger girl on the road to her home village, and learning later that fourteen-year-old Ellen was gang-raped by Russian soldiers and died of typhoid. In an under-staffed hospital where Mahlendorf cared for wounded soldiers, German orderlies and patients asked her to decide whether an injured Russian should be put to death for his compatriots' crimes of slaughter and rape. She was ready to agree, but a young German doctor stepped in, insisting that the hospital must heal, not kill. But for his intervention, Mahlendorf might have become a killer herself.

This superbly written memoir details Mahlendorf's gradually evolving recognition of Nazi evil and deepens our understanding of perpetrators and bystanders, yet tells little about her attitudes toward or knowledge of the killing of Jews. Most poignant are her confessions of the catastrophic emotional sterility resulting from her Nazi training, a psychic devastation that took years to unravel. The book forms a counterpoint to the memoirs of Holocaust survivors; a fascinating study would be a comparison of her book with Ruth Klüger's *Still Alive; A Holocaust Girlhood Remembered*.

Ursula Mahlendorf will be at Keene State College on October 9, 2009 in the Cohen Center's workshop, *Confronting a Difficult Past: Germans Wrestle with the Legacy of Nazism and the Holocaust*. Contact the Center for more information.



Tom White Receives Champion of Human and Civil Rights Award from NHNEA

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## Champion of Human & Civil Rights

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The National Education Association of New Hampshire recently presented Tom White, Coordinator of Educational Outreach for the Cohen Center, with their Champion of Human and Civil Rights Award at their annual Awards Dinner at Attitash Grand Summit Resort on August 5th. The award is presented to a person who is dedicated, selfless, and committed to the cause of maintaining human rights for individuals who face adversity. Congratulations, Tom!



## Cohen Center for Holocaust & Genocide Studies

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### Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Club... Moving Forward

As the college school year gears up, the Holocaust and Genocide Awareness Club, an active student organization, is looking ahead to a hopefully bright future. We are working to broaden our perspectives of a world wounded by genocide and the Holocaust, and are greeting exciting new possibilities of international and national partnerships and friendships along the way. As the decade nears its end, our world is still faced with much turmoil and atrocity. We still have so much work and mending to do. However, I am confident that we will keep working at our never ending tasks of spreading awareness, inspiring advocacy and leadership as well as being helping hands in the process of rebuilding in genocide's aftermath.

As we extend our hands to neighbors around the world, we must also extend our ears and be willing to "bear witness" and listen to those who have suffered. With heightened sensitivities, we can begin to go forward and aid our neighbors in mending. These acts of mending can take so many different forms—physical, spiritual and emotional, just to name a few. We can work with them as they rebuild their communities in the wake of genocides such as Rwanda or Darfur. With this, our club hopes to continue to be a cornerstone in the development of strong and caring global citizens on this college campus.

Yours Truly,  
Michelle C. Sigiel