



Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

KEENE STATE COLLEGE ■ 229 MAIN STREET ■ KEENE, NEW HAMPSHIRE ■ WWW.KEENE.EDU/CCHS

When the Rainbow Breaks...

What happens when the rainbow breaks? This question served as a connecting thread during my fall course, *Rethinking the Holocaust*. Drawing on the associations we make between the great rainbow of Genesis 9 and the personal and social commitments that bind us together in our regard for each other, the class explored ways in which the covenantal order and multi-dimensional assumptions we make about our world were traumatically shattered by the Holocaust. In the wake of what happened, the rainbow broke. During the storm of the Holocaust six million Jewish lives were stolen from them, among them 1.5 million children under twelve. In addition, millions more were lost to war and ruthless acts of murder and hatred. A massive clot, the size of an entire culture, attacked the heart of Western civilization. What happens when the rainbow breaks?

To provide imagery for our semester's work, I had referred students to a series of paintings by Samuel Bak in which he depicted broken rainbows reconstructed from the remnants of his shattered world. In the background of one called *Elegy III*, one sees the receding waters of a deluge that has left myriad yellow stars in its wake. Bak is not the first artist to turn to Noah's story to help us face difficult trauma. In the 19th century Gustave Doré was asked to provide the artwork for an illustrated edition of the Bible. His depictions of the flood show raging storm waters overwhelming the remnants of civilization with parents of children reaching out to pull their terrified children to safety. Doré put faces on the missing victims in the story, helping us to see what Noah, a survivor of such devastation, would have seen.

Hebrew Bible scholar, Danna Nolan Fewell, anchors her book, *The Children of Israel*, in Doré's images, pointing out that this part of the story is left out of the flood narrative. However, for those with critically attentive eyes, they are present in the gaps, the *white fire* of the text. What about the children?¹ How do we look back in the aftermath of such traumatic devastation



The Deluge by Gustave Doré

and not ask about the children? Her words reverberate with Rabbi Irving Greenberg's searing criterion of the murdered children of Auschwitz:

No statement, theological or otherwise, should be made that would not be credible in the presence of the burning children.²

Emil Fackenheim, of blessed memory, put the matter with equal boldness and clarity, citing not only the burning children of Auschwitz, but as well the 1.5 million

children under twelve who were murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. All we do and say thereafter must be held accountable to those children.³ In one form or another their words have haunted and shaped what I do at home, at work, in the voting booth, or in the public square ever since I encountered them. They returned in sharp clarity with the news of what happened in Newtown, CT. Two days before the tragedy, students in my course presented their papers addressing our course theme, reflecting on the compound trauma that we study and its impact on the fragile social contracts and fundamental assumptions we make about the worlds within, around, and beyond us. Sadly, the questions we addressed throughout the semester returned to challenge us in disarming ways: What happens when the rainbow breaks? Will it break across the sky in a fragile arc of promise, or will it shatter before us in irreparable shards? And what about the children? What happens when the rainbow breaks?

Hank Knight, Director

¹ Danna Nolan Fewell, *The Children of Israel: Reading the Bible for the Sake of the Children* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003) 19-40.

² Irving Greenberg, "Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire" in Eva Fleishner, *After Auschwitz: Beginning of a New Era?* (New York: KTAV, 1977) 23.

³ Emil L. Fackenheim, *God's Presence in History: Jewish Affirmations and Philosophical Reflections* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, Inc, 1970) 20 ff.

Grubman Family Teaching Trunk

The Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Keene State College is proud to announce the creation of the Grubman Family Teaching Trunk for Middle Schools. The trunk is designed to honor the memory of Simon Grubman, a survivor of the Lodz ghetto and other Nazi camps. The Grubman family has been a longtime supporter of the Cohen Center's work. Their gifts allowed the Cohen Center to develop the extensive Grubman Children's Book Collection now located in the Charles and Judith Hildebrandt Collection in the Mason Library at Keene State College. The Center has been fortunate to work in partnership with Dr. James Grubman to honor his family's legacy while pursuing our charge, "To Remember... and to teach."

This trunk is designed specifically for middle school educators to assist in teaching a unit on the Holocaust. The trunk is filled with dvds, posters, lesson plans, individual books for a variety of reading levels, books for reading groups, and Judaica items that would commonly be found in Jewish homes.

Cohen Center Fellow, Dee Angwin, will serve as docent to deliver the trunk and work with teachers in utilizing its resources.

www.keene.edu/cchs/grubman_trunk.cfm

Special Delivery

With dimensions that are familiar, a traditional black trunk arrives with a tag that reads, Deliver To...The recipient's name is carefully lettered, but will change as the trunk finds its way from classroom to classroom, hand-delivered by a Cohen Fellow. The trunk's identity, however, *The Grubman Family Teaching Trunk*, will grow in significance. When opened, the trunk reveals a treasure trove of artifacts and educational resources, beginning with family photographs affixed to the inside lid. The well of the trunk is packed with learning materials, traditional items from a Jewish home, and selected archives of Simon Grubman, a Holocaust survivor from Lodz, Poland.



Jim Grubman previews the trunk with Tom White, Marjorie Margolis and Hank Knight at the Cohen Center.



Dr. James Grubman (son of Simon Grubman), shares his family trunk with students from Pan Moskal's class at Hopington Middle School

is filled with history and memory. The contents reflect the experiences of a Jewish family caught in the difficult and tragic circumstances of life in the Lodz ghetto and other dimensions of Nazi-occupied Europe. The Grubman family story, with its personal testimony and family photos, puts important faces on this difficult chapter in human history. Family archives, books, and dvds provide educational commentary for understanding what this family, like so many others, confronted during the traumatic time we call The Holocaust.

Inspired by the work of Polish physician and educator, Janusz Korczak, Simon Grubman had volunteered at Marysin, the boys' camp in the Lodz Ghetto. The young boys Grubman served, like the children Korczak cared for at his orphanage in Warsaw, were murdered, with Korczak, in the Treblinka death camp. Simon survived, compelled to tell their story. As his testimony preserved in this trunk declares, "In this darkest period of my life...the two years I spent with those children from 1940 to 1942 were the brightest in my personal life."

As a survivor, Simon Grubman dedicated himself to bearing witness to what happened and to telling the story of these children and others so that they would not be forgotten. This trunk, therefore, is heavy with more than books, resources and other memorabilia. It also includes an invitation to learn and accept responsibility for the legacy it passes on to others. As Elie Wiesel has noted, "Whoever listens to a witness, becomes a witness." The Grubman Trunk is filled with important testimony, and through its accompanying lesson plans, invites its recipients to become next-generation witnesses. And in this process, students are invited to add their names to others as they build a living chain of memory and witness. Special delivery indeed!

Designed by Cohen Fellow Marjorie Margolis and Tom White, Coordinator of Educational Outreach at the Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the Grubman Family Trunk is made possible by the generous support of the Grubman Family Trust administered by Dr. James Grubman of Turners Falls, MA. The trunk can be reserved by contacting Tom White at the Cohen Center.

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2013 Summer Institute:

You are invited to register for the 2013 Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide and Fellows Seminar to be held at Keene State College from July 14-20, 2013. Teachers and all interested individuals are welcome! The Institute is an intensive, residential one-week experience designed to ground participants in basic themes of Holocaust and genocide studies while exploring multidisciplinary pedagogical approaches and applications for the classroom and other educational settings.

We are pleased to announce that the **New Hampshire Humanities Council** has once again awarded the Cohen Center with a considerable grant for the Institute. Their support is greatly appreciated and helps offset the costs in a significant way for the participants.

Graduates of this program become Cohen Center Fellows, part of a professional support network charged with promoting the mission of the Cohen Center in schools and communities. Currently there are 106 Cohen Center Fellows from 8 states and 7 countries including Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Latvia, Romania, and Slovakia.



Participants of the 2011 Summer Institute on the Holocaust & Genocide & Cohen Fellows Seminar

Cost of the program is offset by donors and grants reducing the registration fee to \$275.00 which includes texts, resource materials, and room and board. Graduate credits are also available.

Registration deadline: May 13, 2013

Registration: <http://www.keene.edu/cchs/summerinst.cfm>

Kristallnacht Remembrance

Each year the Cohen Center works in partnership with the Colonial Theatre in downtown Keene, NH to remember the events of Kristallnacht and recognize its painful legacy. The evening helps the community to reflect upon our responsibilities as citizens of a democracy living in the shadow of Nazism and the Holocaust in the hope that present and future generations take responsibility for building a world free of antisemitism, intolerance, and hate.

Our Remembrance is formed around three themes of, "We Remember," "We Create," and "We Make a Difference." The evening began with the sounding of the shofar after which Stephan Lewy, a childhood survivor of Kristallnacht now from Manchester, NH, gave his witness. He was joined by Cantor Sarra Spierer of Acton, MA and Keene city officials, including the fire and police chiefs, the mayor, a representative of the interfaith clergy association and Rabbi Amy Loewenthal of Congregation Ahavas Achim. Memorial candles were lit for "Victims of Nazism," "the Children," "The Righteous Among the Nations," and for "Our Community." In addition, the Keene Youth Singers and MoCo Arts of Keene performed. This year we were also able to honor Rabbi Leo Trepp, the last surviving rabbi who witnessed Kristallnacht. Through the use of video clips from films about his life we were able to see Rabbi Trepp's love of life, his sense of humor and creativity, while recounting the difficulties in ministering to his rabbinate in Nazi Germany. His widow Gunda joined us from San Francisco and spoke powerfully about Leo's life and legacy and on our responsibility as we continue to "Remember... and to teach."

The evening concluded with a symbolic candle recessional as one generation passed on memorial candles to the next. The solemnity of the Remembrance was powerfully felt as the audience of 350-400 slowly left the theatre in thoughtful silence.

The Remembrance was filmed by Keene's Cheshire Television and will be aired on Keene's public access channel.

Update from the Nuba Mountains

Dr. Samuel Totten is a pioneer of genocide studies in the United States, a co-founding editor of the journal of Genocide Studies and Prevention and professor at the University of Arkansas. Last year, Dr. Totten and 54 other genocide prevention experts petitioned the U.S. government to take action in the Sudan's Blue Nile State and South Kordofan. Dr. Totten proclaimed the trip "one of the toughest trip(s) I've ever undertaken in my life." In an email to his colleagues, he wrote "I am intent on getting the word out about what I experienced, witnessed, and gleaned in regard to the ongoing onslaught by the Government of Sudan against the Nuba Mountains people as well as the projection that they may end up facing widespread and abject starvation (not JUST widespread malnutrition and worse as they do now) once the rainy season hits IF the world does not truly begin serious efforts to address this matter in an efficacious manner – and not three or four or five months from now but ASAP. I should note that many, many people have already suffered terribly from the bombings (not only those who have been killed but who have been terribly maimed, having arms and legs sheared off and worse) and the ongoing lack of food (including, in certain cases outright starvation but mostly malnutrition and severe malnutrition)."

Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation in their first podcast, interviewed Dr. Totten. To learn more of what Dr. Totten learned, please visit:

<https://soundcloud.com/#auschwitzinstitute>

Bloodlands: Eastern Causes of the Holocaust

Dr. Timothy Snyder brought his perspective on the Holocaust to our fifteenth Holocaust Memorial Lecture on October 15, 2012. "I'm starting from the observation that over 14 million human beings died. Not because the other observations are false, but by starting that way we might notice things that we often miss otherwise."

Dr. Snyder told the audience of approximately 200 people. His book, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*, looks at the territory between Poland and Russia between 1930 and 1945 where 14 million people were shot, gassed, or starved to death. Dr. Snyder told us "14 million is a big number...Big numbers are made of little numbers...and little numbers are made up of units of just one."

By taking this approach of the human rights angle of history, he is asking us to rethink how we look at the Holocaust. "You can know everything that can be known about Jews and Jewish history...but that won't help you to predict that there will be a Holocaust," Snyder told us. He challenged the audience to think differently about Auschwitz and the other camps. "The vast majority of people who died in the Holocaust never saw a camp. The ones that we know about saw camps. Why is this? Because people survived camps." Snyder acknowledges that it is a complicated history and topic. "But if you feel it is complicated, then you might get it...Once you look at it in a different way, you'll never look at it the same way you did before."



Dr. Timothy Snyder

Mark Corliss

Outreach and Activities

CCHGS Fellows

Glenda McFadden has accepted a new position as principal of Nashua Catholic Junior High School. We are proud of her accomplishments.

Lindsay Levesque, Brattleboro Union High School in Vermont and Dee Treybig, Bishop Brady High School in Concord, NH represented the Cohen Center at the June 2012 Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR) Summer Institute at Columbia University in New York City. The list of Cohen Center JFR Lerner Fellows has now increased to 14. Dee Treybig, Bishop Brady High School in Concord, NH, was awarded the World Affairs Council of NH International Visitors Teacher of the Year for hosting numerous student forums with visitors from around the globe. Dee teaches a growing senior honors level course in Holocaust & Genocide Studies.

Nashua Holocaust Memorial Project
Fred Teeboom, a hidden child during the

Holocaust, has spearheaded the building of a Holocaust Memorial for New Hampshire. The memorial is being constructed on public land near downtown Nashua, NH and has been supported by city leaders. Fred survived in hiding in the Netherlands while much of his extended family perished in Auschwitz. We encourage you to visit and support this important project.

<http://nhholocaustmemorial.org/media.html>

Civic Leadership Project (CLP)

The second annual CLP took place at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, DC in October 2012 with fourteen local community leaders. The CLP is designed to explore the impact of extremism and prejudice on society and examine the roles and responsibilities of civic leaders in a democratic society. The group toured the permanent exhibit of

the USHMM, and discussed the legacies and lessons of the Holocaust with staff from the Museum and representatives of the Cohen Center.

Our hope is that participants in this program will return to New Hampshire energized by their experience to become active interpreters of the mission of the Cohen Center in order to build a more responsible future and continue to build communities in which respect and justice thrive.



2012 Civic Leadership Project

Tom White

Cohen Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Coming Events: Spring and Summer 2013

Sunday, April 7, 2013

**Yom Ha Shoah Commemoration,
in partnership with Congregation Ahavas Achim**

3:00 pm – Congregation Ahavas Achim

The CAA Religious Committee and the Cohen Center invite the community to come together to remember the Holocaust

Sunday, April 14, 2013

**New Hampshire Jewish Film Festival
2:00 pm – Putnam Arts Lecture Hall**

“Disobedience: The Sousa Mendez Story” sponsored by the Cohen Center. Join us after the film for a panel discussion with Hank Knight, Paul Vincent and Larry Benaquist.

In partnership with the NH Jewish Federation

The festival showcases 10 films over 11 days in 7 cities across New Hampshire.

July 14–20, 2013

**Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Genocide &
Cohen Fellows Seminar**

An intensive one-week residential experience designed to ground participants in the basic themes of Holocaust and genocide studies while exploring multidisciplinary pedagogical approaches and applications for the classroom and other educational settings.

**For more information, check www.keene.edu or call the
Cohen Center at 603-358-2490.**

Thursday, April 11, 2013

**Charles A. Hildebrandt Award for
Holocaust Studies Presentations
7:30 pm – Mabel Brown Room**

Recipients of the Hildebrandt Award will present their work.

