Children and Mass Violence

19–20 OCTOBER 2017

With the ongoing conflict in Syria and its devastating toll on children as a backdrop, this conference will explore the traumatic impact of mass violence on the most vulnerable segment of society—children and youth. Experts will examine the destructive strategies and methods of the perpetrators, the suffering, agency and coping mechanisms of the victims, and the lasting injuries of those who survived.

CLARK UNIVERSITY

STRASSLER CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE STUDIES

CHILDREN AND MASS VIOLENCE
19-20 October 2017

19 OCTOBER: KEYNOTE
Dana Commons, Higgins Lounge

7:00 PM:
Lina Sergie Attar, Karam Foundation: "Stories from Syria's Children: Growing up in the Age of Genocide and Displacement"

20 OCTOBER: CONFERENCE
Dana Commons, Higgins Lounge

9:00 AM: Welcome and Opening Remarks

Thomas Kühne, Clark University

9:30-11:30 AM: Native American Genocide

Margaret D. Jacobs, University of Nebraska: "Innocence and Elimination: Indigenous Child Removal in Settler Colonial Nations"

Andrew Woolford, University of Manitoba: "The Destruction of Families: Canadian Residential Schools and the Refamilization of Indigenous Children"

1:30-3:30 PM: Armenian Genocide

Nazan Maksudyan, Leibniz Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin: "Survival of Children during the Armenian Genocide: Resilience, Agency, Empowerment"

Nora N. Nercessian, Independent Scholar: "Rites of Passage: From Orphan to Worthy Citizen"

4:00 – 6:00 PM: Holocaust

Joanna Sliwa, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany: "The Place of Jewish Children in the Nazi Scheme of Genocide"

Avinoam J. Patt, University of Hartford: "The Future of the Jewish People: Youth and Education in the Jewish Displaced Persons Camps of Postwar Germany"

Sponsored by the Friends of the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Professor in Armenian Genocide Studies; Alan Edelman and Debbie Sosland-Edelman; and Fran Snyder and David Voremberg '72

Children and Mass Violence

October 19-20, 2017

Under the impression of the ongoing conflict in Syria and its devastating toll on children, this conference will explore the traumatic impact of mass violence on the most vulnerable segment of society—children and youth. Experts will examine the destructive strategies and methods of the perpetrators, the suffering of the victims, their agency, their coping mechanisms, and the lasting injuries of those who survived. They will discuss these issues through the lens of three historical cases: the Indigenous children of North America and Australia who were forcefully removed from their families and communities and assimilated into the white settler culture; the orphaned and destitute children who survived the Armenian Genocide; and Jewish children during the Holocaust whom the Nazis deemed dangerous due to their role in continuing the "Jewish race."

KEYNOTE: Thursday, October 19, 7:00 PM
Dana Commons, Higgins Center

Lina Sergie Attar (Karam Foundation)

Stories from Syria's Children: Growing up in the Age of Genocide and Displacement

What does "home" mean to a child growing up as a refugee? What kind of future do we envision for the millions of people fleeing war, searching for sanctuary, and longing to belong? In this personal talk about the Syrian humanitarian crisis and its devastating toll on children, Sergie Attar describes the experience of living through the deep layers of unimaginable loss when conflict hits home and explores innovative and meaningful ways to nurture hope in times of despair.

Lina Sergie Attar**,** a Syrian-American architect and writer from Aleppo, is co-founder and CEO of Karam Foundation. In 2007, Attar developed the vision of Karam (which means generosity in Arabic). Since 2011, she has directed Karam in its focus on the Syrian humanitarian crisis: developing innovative education programs for Syrian refugee youth, distributing aid to Syrian refugee families, and funding projects initiated by Syrians for Syrians. Attar is co-founder of the

How Many More? project and serves on the Board of Directors of The Syria Campaign. Her articles and essays have appeared in the New York Times, the Chicago Tribune, Foreign Policy, Politico, and the Huffington Post. She has appeared on CNN, NBC News, the BBC News, NPR and other media outlets. She is a graduate of the University of Aleppo, Rhode Island School of Design, and Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

CONFERENCE: Friday, October 20, 2017 9:00 AM – 6:00 PM – Dana Commons, Higgins Center

9:00 AM:
Welcome and Opening Remarks

Thomas Kühne (Clark University)

9:30 AM-11:30 AM:
Native American Genocide

Margaret D. Jacobs (University of Nebraska)

Innocence and Elimination: Indigenous Child Removal in Settler Colonial Nations

Margaret Jacobs will explore the ways in which white settlers in Australia, Canada, and the United States have used the concept of innocence to target Indigenous children for removal

and to deflect attention from their efforts to eliminate Indigenous peoples. Missionaries, reformers and government authorities in all three nations routinely represented Indigenous children as innocent victims of both their Indigenous environments and of conflict between settlers and Indigenous people. Settlers justified removal of Indigenous children from their families and communities as a gesture of benevolent rescue rather than a human rights abuse that would lead to the elimination of Indigenous identities and communities.

Jacobs, Chancellor's Professor of History and Director of the Women's and Gender Studies Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, has been researching Indigenous child removal for nearly two decades. Her book *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880-1940* (2009), won the 2010 Bancroft Prize from Columbia University. Her most recent book, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (2014), unmasks how government bureaucrats vilified Indigenous mothers and promoted the removal of Indigenous children to white families in the United States, Australia, and Canada after World War II.

Andrew Woolford (University of Manitoba)

The Destruction of Families: Canadian Residential Schools and the Refamilization of Indigenous Children

Andrew Woolford will examine how Canadian residential schools, as carceral institutions, borrowed techniques from the management of juvenile delinquency in Europe. Drawing from institutions such as Mettray in France, these schools targeted the Indigenous family as a site for group destruction. These interventions not only promoted efforts to sever Indigenous children from their families, but also provided these children with new affiliations to the staff, school and nation through a process that Foucault describes as "refamilization. " In this context, even occasional kindnesses experienced by the children can be understood as part of a system intended to eliminate indigeneity and rapidly assimilate Indigenous children into Euro-Canadian culture.

Woolford is professor of sociology at the University of Manitoba. He is author of '*This Benevolent Experiment': Indigenous Boarding Schools, Genocide and Redress in the United States and Canada* (2015). He is co-editor of *Canada and Colonial Genocide* (2017), *The Idea of a Human Rights Museum* (2015), and *Colonial Genocide in Indigenous North America* (2014). He is currently working on two community-based research projects with Indigenous residential school survivors. *Embodying Empathy*, will design, build, and test a virtual Indian Residential School that will serve as a site of historical knowledge mobilization and empathy formation. *Remembering Assiniboia*, entails generating and developing an archive and memorial for the Assiniboia Residential School by hosting a reunion for former students.

11:45 AM – 1:15 PM: Lunch Break

1:30 PM-3:30 PM:
Armenian Genocide

Nazan Maksudyan (Leibniz Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin)

Survival of Children during the Armenian Genocide: Resilience, Agency, Empowerment

Nazan Maksudyan will discuss the survival stories of Armenian children from a perspective that resists victimizing them. When the words genocide and children come together, we inevitably visualize tragic images with starving, crying, dying children, lying in a barren setting with their sick, skeleton-like bodies. These are memorable visions of a cruel historical reality. However, no matter how easy it was to kill a child, it was harder to destroy his will to live. Survivor testimonies underline that children were more than passive victims. They not only survived, but also played games, formed friendships, and took part in adventurous journeys. Their strong impulse to survive provided children with resilience, talents, and the strength to fight for their lives.

Maksudyan is a Research Associate at the Leibniz Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Berlin. Her research examines the history of children and youth in the Ottoman Empire during the 19th and 20th centuries, with particular attention to gender, sexuality, education, and

humanitarianism. Her *Orphans and Destitute Children in the Late Ottoman Empire* (2014) treats those who are farthest removed from power as the lead actors in history. She recently published "Agents or Pawns? Nationalism and Ottoman Children during the Great War," in the *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* (2016).

Nora N. Nercessian (Independent Scholar)

Rites of Passage: From Orphan to "Worthy Citizen"

Between 1915 and 1920, an estimated 60,000 orphaned Armenian children crossed the border into Russian Armenia, having spent months or years wandering in fields and mountains, subsisting on grass and whatever they could steal, covered only in tattered rags and watchful of predators—animal and human. By 1921, some 25,000 who survived gathered in what came to be known as *The City of Orphans*, the largest orphanage in the world at the time. Nora Nercessian will examine the opposing views of American relief workers and Armenian government officials, especially of the Soviet era, regarding the kind of citizen who would emerge from the gates of the orphanage.

Nercessian is an independent scholar who served on the faculty and in the administration of Harvard University from 1981 to 2005. Her book, *The City of Orphans: Relief Workers, Commissars and the "Builders of the New Armenia" Alexandropol /Leninakan 1919-1931* (2016), tells the story of the world's largest orphanage of the early 1920s in Alexandropol (now Gyumri) in Eastern Armenia. She sheds light on the complex political reality, in which some 25,000 orphans grew up in the former military barracks of the Czar, under the tutelage of American Near East Relief workers and Soviet Armenian commissars. Each party insisting on its prerogative to transform the Western Armenian orphans into citizens of Armenia.

3:30 PM-4:00 PM: Afternoon Break

4:00 PM -6:00 PM:
Holocaust

Joanna Sliwa (Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany)

The Place of Jewish Children in the Nazi Scheme of Genocide.

Images of suffering children shape our understanding of young people's lives during the Holocaust. They hint at the place of children in the Nazi scheme of genocide. A closer look at Nazi policies and actions toward children reveals the role of young people in Nazi ideology either as an asset or as a perceived threat to the "Aryan" racial community. Joanna Sliwa focuses on Jewish children during the Holocaust, whom the Nazis deemed both useless due to their inability to perform labor and dangerous due to their role in continuing the "Jewish race." This paper plumbs the events and processes that framed the Holocaust in Poland in general, and in Kraków, in particular, through the lens of the children's experiences.

Sliwa is a historian at the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference). Her current book project (initially her Clark PhD dissertation) examines the Holocaust in Kraków, Poland, from the perspective of Jewish children's experiences. She approaches the topic from multiple angles – the German authorities, Jewish community, gentile neighbors, the Jewish family, and the youth themselves – to widen the view of Polish Jewish life during the Holocaust by giving voice and agency to the youngest victims of persecution.

Avinoam J. Patt (University of Hartford)

"The Future of the Jewish People": Youth and Education in the Jewish Displaced Persons Camps of Postwar Germany

In the summer of 1945, there were almost no children under the age of five among the surviving population in postwar Germany. Over the course of 1946 as the DP population swelled with the infiltration of Jews from Eastern Europe, the number of children under the age of 17 grew to over 25,000. Most had endured the war in Nazi-occupied Europe or in the far reaches of the Soviet Union and had missed over five years of education, carrying with them the trauma of persecution, murder, and unspeakable loss. As international aid organizations worked to establish an organized educational framework, the educational sector became highly politicized. Avinoam Patt will examine the experience of formal and informal education from the perspective of the surviving children. As aid agencies struggled to establish formal educational frameworks, informal educational groups of young orphans, living together in kibbutz groups and collectives became the most appealing option for young survivors. While education provided a focus for the future, the social frameworks around young people helped to provide a sense of family in the aftermath of catastrophic loss.

Patt is the Philip D. Feltman Professor of Modern Jewish History at the Maurice Greenberg Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Hartford, where he is also director of the Museum of Jewish Civilization. He is the author of *Finding Home and Homeland: Jewish Youth and Zionism in the Aftermath of the Holocaust* (2009) and co-editor of *We are Here: New Approaches to the Study of Jewish Displaced Persons in Postwar Germany* (2010). He directs the *In Our Own Words Interview Project* with the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. His current book projects include co-editing *The JDC at 100* and writing a book on the early postwar memory of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

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