

Ellen Johnson

B.A., History, Transylvania University, 2015

M.A., Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Kean University, 2018

Johnson who holds the Mildred Suesser Fellowship, studies the effects of ghettoization on Jewish intergroup relations. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies, she earned an MA in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Kean University with a thesis that investigated the ideological development of George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party in the 1960s. Alarmed by the increase in antisemitic incidents following the 2016 presidential election, Johnson studied Rockwell's popularization of Holocaust denial and the connection between his antisemitic and racist rhetoric. Her thesis highlighted Rockwell's influence on contemporary white nationalism and neo-Nazi organizations.

Johnson travelled to Berlin in 2017 to participate in the Leo Baeck Institute Summer University in Advanced Jewish Studies. During that program, she undertook research examining the relationship between German and Eastern European Jews in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp that shaped her interest in Jewish identity politics within the Nazi ghetto and camp systems. With assistance from the Sachsenhausen Museum's archivist, Johnson interviewed the last survivor of Sachsenhausen still living in Berlin. Her work on this project laid the groundwork for similar research that has informed her dissertation project.

Johnson's doctoral research considers how ghettoization transformed prisoners' identities in the Riga and Łódź ghettos. She seeks to document the transformation of spaces, Jewish identities, and intergroup relations. Her research necessitates drawing upon Yiddish language testimonies. To that end, she attended the Naomi Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program at Tel Aviv University. An additional stipend from the Naomi Foundation supported her research at Yad Vashem studying the testimonies of German Jews deported to Riga whose perspectives will be essential to her research on that ghetto. At the Ghetto Fighters House, she examined artifacts from Łódź inscribed with identity markers including clothing, notebooks, shofar, and toys.

Presentations at two conferences reflect Johnson's diverse research interests. At the Annual Scholars Conference on the Churches and the Holocaust at the University of Texas at Dallas, she delivered a paper, "Jozef Tiso's Slovakian Nationalism: The Relationship between Collaboration and Catholicism,"

that investigated the Slovakian dictator's motivations as the first Nazi-allied state to voluntarily deport its Jews. Her paper, "Watershed Assassination Did Not Ease Rwandan Genocide Recognition," at the Millersville University Conference on the Holocaust and Genocide, was part of a panel that challenged the notion that visible turning points of violence, such as "Kristallnacht," facilitate international responses. Johnson's paper, argued that despite having a salient starting point, the international community failed to address the Rwandan genocide as such until after it had ended.