Whoever fails to increase knowledge, decreases knowledge. – the wisdom of the sages
Letter from the Directors

The trenchant observation, “The past is never dead. It’s not even past,” drawn from a 1940 William Faulkner story, resonates strongly with subjects explored at the Strassler Center. Student and faculty research, conferences, workshops, and lectures aim to shed light on the violent past. Academic investigation into the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, the Genocide in Rwanda, genocides and mass crimes perpetrated in Africa, the Americas, the Balkans, Bangladesh, Cambodia, and elsewhere deepen our understanding of their causes, conduct, and consequences. Tragically, these events not only remain relevant in many places; they are frequently politicized and can be dangerous for those seeking to investigate them. Objective scholarship, often criminalized by repressive governments, is essential to guard against these consequences. Genocides do not easily fade into the past, but knowledge and insight can lessen their effects.

The aftermath of mass atrocities was central to the spring 2017 conference, Holding Accountability Accountable, which explored justice mechanisms following genocide and state violence. Consistent with the Strassler Center’s commitment to comparative study, participants from 14 countries examined accountability and transitional justice across a range of cases and throughout history. Human rights lawyer Andrea Gualde, in her keynote lecture, expressed optimism about the long road to justice in Argentina that ultimately held many perpetrators to account. Trials have proved crucial to establishing a narrative about the crimes committed under the military junta. On the other hand, in a public talk about the value of forgetting, journalist and critic David Rieff complicated the picture with a contrarian view about ongoing remembrance. In his estimation, prolonging the memory of mass violence beyond the lifetimes of victims and their children and grandchildren perpetuates further crimes. Unsurprisingly, this view provoked robust argument.

Scholarly debate is important but practical steps are essential. How do we move from knowledge about atrocity to action and prevention? This essential question matters deeply to our community of students, faculty, and friends. Now beginning our second year as directors, we continue to seek answers. Expanding human rights education, forging strategic linkages, convening important conversations with thoughtful partners, pushing the boundaries of knowledge, examining what and how we teach about the past are fundamental to our vision. As the Strassler Center develops, we will continue to pursue dynamic connections between academia, pedagogy, and activism. We are committed to adding faculty who can strengthen knowledge about individual genocides as well as provide a theoretical framework that deepens appreciation for similarities and differences. To do so comprehensively, we desperately need expertise regarding genocidal violence perpetrated against indigenous peoples in the Americas and the history of African genocide from colonization to the present. To accomplish our ambitious agenda, we have established a leadership council to help secure the support and resources we need to undertake significant new initiatives. We look to members of the Council, co-chaired by Clark University trustee Rebecca Colin ’89 PhD and David Voremberg ’72, to advance these efforts.

If, as H.G. Wells wrote in The Outline of History, “Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe,” then we must teach our students to convert knowledge to action. This endeavor should contribute to a more engaged citizenry and while it may not atone for past injustices or ensure a commitment to “never again,” it underlies a necessary conversation. We want our graduates to become leaders in that conversation. The 2017-2018 academic year brings four brilliant new students to the Center whose interests and approaches complement our goals. They join us as we embark upon exciting new initiatives such as the fourth International Graduate Student Conference, organized in partnership with Hebrew University Professors Dani Blatman and Amos Goldberg. This series of conferences gathers doctoral students together to germinate significant ideas, to broaden the boundaries of genocide studies, and to introduce lesser known cases and novel approaches. While these promising young scholars may not win the “race between education and catastrophe,” they are our best hope.

Your interest and support help us fulfill our mission.

Mary Jane Rein, PhD, Executive Director
Thomas Kühne, Director and Strassler Professor
EVENTS & LINKAGES

6 OCTOBER 2016

A panel discussion, jointly sponsored by the Graduate School of Geography and the Strassler Center, brought married Geography alumni Judy Dworkin PhD ’78 and David Pijawka PhD ’83 to campus to discuss their work in Indian affairs. This was a special homecoming for Dworkin and Pijawka who met and married as Clark students. Throughout their careers, both have worked passionately on Indian rights and promoting sustainable economic development. Dworkin, a managing partner at Sacks Tierney law firm in Scottsdale, AZ, manages their Indian Law and Tribal Relations practice. In addition, she serves as a judge on various community courts and teaches about water law and natural resources at the Arizona State University Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law. Pijawka, Associate Director of the School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning at Arizona State University, is an award-winning professor and teaches the largest undergraduate course on sustainability. The author of numerous articles, books, monographs, and proceedings, Pijawka’s recent work focuses on community projects along the U.S. Mexico-Border and in Native American tribal communities.

Dworkin briefly reviewed the development of Federal Indian Law. She began by clarifying that while the term “Native American” has become commonplace, “Indian” is not offensive, rather that is how legislation refers to Native people. Citing several historic cases and judgements, she explained how Indian policy has swung between extremes: from a melting pot approach that viewed Indians as similar to other ethnic groups to one that focused on their differences as well as their right to self-govern as tribes. She summarized laws that defined tribes as “domestic dependent nations,” according to Chief Justice John Marshall (1831). This approach created a trust relationship, with Indians treated as wards of the state, which resulted in major land losses to Indian country. The development of tribal governments since the 1970s has resulted in a more positive outlook for tribes that now enjoy greater self-determination.

Pijawka further examined the trust relationship between tribes and the Federal Government in discussing economic development. When the laws changed to provide more independence from the Federal Government, many tribal communities were deprived of basic services like housing, medical care, and schooling. Moreover, underdevelopment on the reservations led many tribal people to leave. However, the Indian Self-Determination Act of the mid-70s proved useful in moving these communities towards sustainable development. Pijawka probed into why changing the economic condition of tribal communities happens so slowly despite resources and knowledge. He posited that the legacy of the violent past might be an underlying factor and advocated taking account of historical, cultural, and spiritual factors in developmental planning.

Professors Jody Emel, Acting Director of the Graduate School of Geography, and Thomas Kühne, Director of the Strassler Center moderated the discussion. Given the full dimension of destruction these tribes have experienced up to the present, Kühne asked whether recognizing these wrongs as genocide would help Indian communities claim reparations. In reply, Dworkin returned to whether the Federal Government failed to meet the standard of the trust relationship. In her legal practice, applying the term genocide would not have a positive impact on the people she represents. Yet, Dworkin cited examples of Federal policies that she described as “artifacts of a genocide program.” Pijawka addressed failures to provide adequate education, health, and other basic services, which demonstrate a fundamental lack of concern and perpetuate historical trauma. He went further in drawing a connection to genocide by discussing the tragic consequences of the Navajo’s long walk, which he compared to his father’s experience during the Holocaust. He, too, had a long walk from Pultusk, Poland into the ghetto. Kühne underscored that development programs designed to help tribes also impose western ideas, which erode Indian culture and suggest genocide to scholars in the field. Yet, Dworkin emphasized that over 500 federally recognized tribes in the US improve the lives of their members every day without addressing the question of genocide. Pijawka closed by making a case for universities to serve as venues for sharing knowledge and to help in bringing younger Indians in closer touch with their traditional culture.

Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman
Christopher Browning, “Holocaust History and Survivor Testimony: The Case of the Starachowice Factory Slave Labor Camps”

26 OCTOBER 2016

In July 1944, Jewish prisoners from the Nazi slave-labor camp Starachowice were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Some survivors of the transport remember being taken directly to the labor camp in Birkenau, others recall undergoing a selection on the train platform. How do historians reconcile these inconsistencies? Renowned historian Christopher Browning, Frank Porter Graham Professor Emeritus at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, discussed the function and place of survivor testimony in the reconstruction of Holocaust history. Judi ’75 and Lawrence MA ’76 Bohn generously supported his visit and lecture. Drawing on his 2010 study, Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave Labor Camp, he considered whether the frailty of human memory disqualifies survivors’ eyewitness testimonies as evidence.

Starachowice piqued Browning’s interest when he learned that survivor testimonies about the camp had been disparaged. Over sixty witnesses were called to testify in the 1972 trial of Walther Becker, the German police chief in Starachowice responsible for the liquidation of the nearby Jewish ghetto and the deportation of nearly 4,000 Jews to their deaths at Treblinka. Many described Becker’s role in the enslavement and murder of Starachowice’s Jews—yet, the Hamburg State Court acquitted him. In writing a history of Starachowice from the perspective of its victims—Browning indicted Becker anew.

As incriminating documentation had largely been destroyed, Browning compiled accounts from 292 witnesses who had been interned at Starachowice. These included testimonies collected by the Jewish Historical Commission in 1945; 125 transcripts of interrogations conducted in preparation for Becker’s trial in the 1960s; and Browning’s own 2006 interviews. In some cases, Browning could juxtapose testimonies from the same survivor and examine discrepancies between them. Anticipating that testimonies would homogenize as survivors in geographic centers spoke to each other, Browning predicted that variations would fade as communal memory formed and diverged from communal memories elsewhere. Instead, a high degree of consistency emerged across time and place.

Acknowledging blind spots inherent to survivor testimony, Browning cautioned that we ought to speak of memories, rather than memory. He charted a typology of memory: first, there are repressed memories of events so searing that survivors could not function while remaining conscious of the trauma they induced; secret memories are acknowledged but seldom revealed; and communal memories belong collectively to the group that lived through a shared experience. Survivors of Starachowice might have spoken about certain memories among themselves, but they imagined outsiders would not relate or would judge them without merit. Finally, Browning spoke of public memories—those accessible to him as a researcher.

The fluidity between these memory layers proved consequential. In his interviews, Browning gained access to secret and communal memories as a result of his fluency in the history of Starachowice. Some survivors discussed rape and sexual violence. Others described revenge killings in which Jewish prisoners strangled prisoner functionaries, something survivors would not have disclosed in connection with Becker’s trial. Had Browning crossed into familiar terrain that engendered openness on the part of survivors? Or did their sharing rest on an earlier, normative shift in the communal discourse of Starachowice survivors, or perhaps survivors at large? And what are the ethics governing investigation of contested, shameful, morally ambiguous memories? In crafting an integrative history based on testimony, Browning seems to have approached the limits of his methodology. While his Starachowice interviews accessed communal memories and provided evidence to help differentiate “fact” from “fiction,” potential pitfalls abound, such as contradictions in memories about the selection upon arrival at Auschwitz.

Browning’s foray into the landscape of memory raises questions about the search for evidence and the ineffability of victim experience. The inability to relate the totality of what they experienced is a matter of the historical record. Historians seek to establish whether an event took place, yet they also broach victims’ struggles in reckoning with real-time experience. Often, whether and how an event unfolded matters less than the ways in which it defied communal assumptions and could seldom be believed.
Joshua Rubenstein, “The Last Days of Stalin”

6 DECEMBER 2016

Following the death of the tyrannical Soviet leader Josef Stalin, his political heirs embarked on a temporary course of reform that might have changed the entire direction of the Cold War. In a sudden relaxation of the Soviet gulag system, millions of prisoners were released. The Soviet leadership renounced the so-called “Doctors’ Plot,” the latest development in a campaign of repression against Soviet Jews, and released the wrongly imprisoned physicians. Peace overtures toward the west heralded the possibility of reducing tensions in Europe and ending the war in Korea. What inspired these liberalizing policies and how did the world respond? Joshua Rubenstein, an associate of the Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies at Harvard University, considered these questions at the invitation of Political Science Professor Valerie Sperling in connection with her course, “Mass Murder and Genocide under Communism.”

Rubenstein, author of The Last Days of Stalin (2016), surveyed the events that unfolded in the aftermath of Stalin’s death. He argued that a window opened for alleviating hostilities and explained why it closed with no significant change in the global political arena. Born in the Soviet Republic of Georgia, Stalin governed the Soviet Union from 1929 to 1953. Embracing a utopian ideology, he took extreme measures to create a socialist society. To that end, he assumed direct control over state institutions and pushed the country toward rapid urbanization, collectivization, and industrialization. He ushered in a “reign of terror” with the help of Soviet security and secret services that targeted prominent party functionaries as well as average citizens. Millions were designated “enemies of the people” and imprisoned in forced labor camps, known collectively as the Gulag.

A notoriously difficult personality, Stalin was estranged from his children and had no close relationships. He often demanded that his inner circle of party leaders join him for nights of drinking. Typically, on the following morning, he would summon someone on the household staff for tea or breakfast. On March 1, 1953, after such a night, Stalin failed to make his usual summons. Forbidden to approach his quarters without being called, no one checked on him until that night. He was found passed out on the floor, having suffered from what appeared to be a stroke. Stalin died several days later. His body lay in state in Red Square where tens of thousands of Soviet citizens made the pilgrimage to see him. Dozens of foreign delegations visited Moscow to pay their respects and to signal their cooperation with whomever would take Stalin’s place.

According to Rubenstein, following Stalin’s funeral, the Soviet leadership launched a “peace offensive” meant to signal a readiness to engage with the west. The newly elected US President Dwight D. Eisenhower and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill followed these developments closely. The Soviet Union had been their bitter enemy since the end of World War II and it was hard for the two leaders to trust that their communist rivals were genuinely prepared to change. Churchill wanted to arrange a summit with the Soviets or at least initiate a dialogue, while Eisenhower, influenced by his secretary of state John Foster Dulles, a hardened cold warrior, refused to believe that the Soviets were ready to warm relations. As time passed without a show of rapprochement, the new Soviet leaders interpreted this as a hostile message and returned to their rigid foreign policies. Eisenhower’s failure to take advantage of this opportunity extended the Cold War by more than thirty years. Had the American and British leaders responded to their Soviet counterparts, many bloody Cold War conflicts might have been avoided.

Rubenstein’s lecture offered a lesson to historians and political scientists. Anyone concerned with conflicts and their resolution would benefit from his analysis of missed opportunities following Stalin’s death.

Maayan Armelin
Chen Bram, “Caucasian Crossways: the Holocaust, Circassian Genocide, and Stalin’s Deportations

14 FEBRUARY 2017

Hebrew University Professor Chen Bram uses his anthropological training to shed light on the tragic history of the Caucasus, a multiethnic, mountainous region at the border of Europe and Asia. Bram’s research integrates the history of atrocities and shows how the memories of mass violence intersect in the Caucasus. His investigation into Jewish–Muslim relations during the Nazi occupation helps to explain the survival of ‘Mountain Jews’ in Nalchik, capital of the Autonomous Republic of Kabardino-Balkaria. The Circassian Muslim population, having experienced mass murder, ethnic cleansing, and deportation during the 19th century Russian colonization of the Caucasus, aided their Jewish neighbors. Then again, even before the end of World War II, the Circassians experienced further victimization as the Germans withdrew and Stalin organized deportations in an effort to divide and rule the region. Bram examines the intersections between these historical episodes and studies the efforts of Circassian activists to secure recognition.

A Research Fellow at the Truman Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University, Bram served as Dana and Yossi Hollander Visiting Professor. His semester-long visit, part of an ongoing initiative to strengthen scholarly cooperation between the Strassler Center and Israeli scholars and institutions, presented new areas for research and fresh methodological approaches. Bram’s work advances discussion about the place of the Holocaust in the history of modern genocide and mass violence. Thus, he appreciates the debates generated by the June 2016 conference of the International Network of Genocide Scholars organized by Raz Segal PhD ’13 at Hebrew University. Bram welcomes serious discussions about genocide research happening outside of Israel and seeks to fit his research into new paradigms. On the micro level, Bram examines the fate of Caucasus Jews during the Holocaust, while on the macro level, he seeks to understand how their experiences fit into the broader history of mass violence in the region.

Bram began his lecture on “Caucasian Crossways” with a touching anecdote about the aftermath of the Beslan terror attack. On September 1, 2004, Islamic militants seized 1,100 hostages in a school in the town of Beslan, North Ossetia (an autonomous republic in the North Caucasus region of the Russian Federation). The terrorists killed 385 people, including 186 children. Caucasus Jews living in Ashkelon, Israel responded with deep sympathy to these events. They invited survivors of the attack for a month-long visit to a village in the Galilee settled by Circassian Muslims expelled by the Tsar in the 19th century. In describing their impulse to extend assistance, members of the community of Caucasus Jews commented, “they helped us during the Nazi occupation, now it is our turn to help them.”

The Beslan terror attack is an example of the ongoing consequences of the national traumas that Jewish and Muslim communities experienced under the Tsars, the Nazis, and Stalin. While their suffering is largely unknown, activism is starting to bring attention to their history. In 2012, Nalchik Jews won their case for recognition in Israel’s highest court. As their story gains attention, the role played by Circassian Muslims in the survival of Mountain Jews will become better known. At the same time, members of the Circassian diaspora are lobbying for acknowledgment of their victimization. Circassian American activists attended Bram’s lecture and are eager to deepen their understanding of the shared experience of genocide.

Following the 2008 conflict between Georgia and Russia, the Tsarist archives were opened and, as a result, we know that the Imperial Russian government targeted civilians in order to erase the Circassian population. But more research is needed in order to further contextualize Russian colonialism. Circassians were deported to the Ottoman Empire which prompts the question: did Ottoman Turks emulate the Circassian Genocide? First year doctoral student Burçin Gereçek, writes about Emir Pasha who survived the Circassian deportation as a child. Living in Sivas he witnessed Armenian deportations and aided victims. Thus, a new Caucasian crossway emerged thanks to comparative study and cooperation.

Mary Jane Rein
Raz Segal, “Genocide in the Carpathians”

23 FEBRUARY 2017

Raz Segal PhD ’13 returned to the Strassler Center to present findings from his recently published book Genocide in the Carpathians – War, Social Breakdown, and Mass Violence, 1941–1945 (Stanford University Press 2016). A graduate of the Center’s doctoral program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and now assistant professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Stockton University, Segal is a rising star in the field. His book, based upon his doctoral dissertation, examines the exclusion, persecution, and mass murder of Jews in Southeast Europe during World War II. He places these atrocities into the context of imperial collapse and the rise of nation states in the first half of the twentieth century. In his thought-provoking lecture, Segal described the responses of Jews and gentiles to mass violence in the Hungarian borderlands of Subcarpathian Rus.’ The region was a former domain of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, incorporated into the new state of Czechoslovakia in 1920 and occupied by Hungary in 1939.

As a multiethnic region, several different groups inhabited Subcarpathian Rus,’ including Jews, Romanians, Hungarians, Slovaks, and the majority ethnic group, Carpatho-Ruthenians. While differences remained salient throughout the inter-war period, Segal highlighted that inter-group coexistence had previously fostered a society and culture to which each group belonged. Yet, anti-Jewish sentiments emerged among Carpatho-Ruthenians throughout the 1920s and 1930s, fueled by the Czech government’s refusal to grant autonomy to the region. Since Jews supported the new rulers, mostly by sending their children to Czech schools, they were seen as impediments to Carpatho-Ruthenian collective aspirations. When Subcarpathian Rus’ achieved autonomy in late 1938, these sentiments led to outbursts of sporadic anti-Jewish violence, which ended with the arrival of Hungarian forces to the region.

As the Holocaust unfolded across Hungary, Carpatho-Ruthenians passively witnessed the ghettoization of their Jewish neighbors and deportation to Auschwitz in 1944. But Segal argued that the narrow focus on this year in the historiography obscures the broader context of the pre-1944 history of Hungary, which shaped such behavior. During the war years, the Hungarian state sought to erode the region’s multi-ethnic societal fabric and render future inter-ethnic coexistence impossible. Multiple layers of violence unfolded, directed against Jews and non-Jews alike. Thus, at times, Jews found themselves in the position of bystanders as Hungarian soldiers engaged in massacres of their Carpatho-Ruthenian and Romanian neighbors.

Segal exposed a new dimension of Jewish experience during the Holocaust. Perceiving Jews beyond the circumstances in which they were either victims or engaged in resistance offered new insights into the phenomenon of bystanding and a richer picture of Jewish behavior. Citing testimonies, he emphasized that Jews who observed or heard about the killings of Carpatho-Ruthenians and Romanians experienced disbelief, which stemmed from the perception of the violence as an assault on and rupture of a familiar world of interethnic coexistence that defined normality in the region. Whereas the historian Saul Friedländer, in his acclaimed book The Years of Extermination, made the disbelief Jews experienced as victims of the Holocaust the cornerstone of his narrative, Segal argued that Jewish bystanders who witnessed the killing of non-Jews in Subcarpathian Rus’ exhibited a similar reaction.

The social disruption caused by the violence was intense. While many Jews found themselves in a position in which helping the victims rightly seemed impossible, the seeds of devastation were sown. Their passivity contributed to the gradual obliteration of the shared society and culture that characterized life in pre-war Subcarpathian Rus.’ The breakdown of coexistence culminated in 1944. Not only did many Carpatho-Ruthenians choose to stay behind closed curtains when they became bystanders to the violent expulsion of their Jewish neighbors, some also gathered on the streets to watch the cruel spectacle.

Segal concluded by emphasizing the need for examining the bystanders in the context of broader historical processes. In Subcarpathian Rus,’ the Hungarian occupation corroded the social and cultural fabric of a multiethnic society. Isolating the Carpatho-Ruthenians as bystanders in 1944 from this backdrop fails to take into consideration the complex factors that shaped their actions. Segal’s fascinating lecture, which situates the Holocaust in the context of broader genocide research, is an inspiration to his younger colleagues currently pursuing PhD’s at the Strassler Center.

Emil Kjerte
Elissa Mailänder, “Kinder, Kirche, Küche, and KZ? Inside the World of Female Perpetrators”

27 MARCH 2017

While studies of concentration camp perpetrators usually emphasize institutional practice, Elissa Mailänder’s work stands out for its insights into the social function of violence. Mailänder, Associate Professor at the Centre d’histoire de Sciences Po in Paris, presented highlights of her research on female perpetrators in the Majdanek Konzentrationslager with the support of the William P. Goldman & Brothers Foundation. “Kinder, Kirche, Küche, and KZ? Inside the World of Female Perpetrators,” explored how women’s work as camp guards challenged Nazism’s gender ideals in which women’s lives centered on the realms of children (kinder), church (kirche), and kitchen (küche). Mailänder confirmed the individual agency of female perpetrators who utilized their new social power, stating, “Female guards not only further perpetuated the deplorable living conditions in the camps, but they also exercised direct power over and physical violence on the prisoners.”

Mailänder’s work exemplifies Nazism’s inversion of social hierarchies of gender and race. In her view, the SS Aufseherinnen at Majdanek were not inherently violent, but became so because of the specific context of their work. Mailänder described the milestones in this process: recruitment, adaptation, practice, and post-war lives. Despite the fact that female perpetrators enjoyed leisure time and social opportunities with men, they experienced the camp as a workplace, one that was distinctly different from those found in civilian spaces. In Majdanek, located in the General Government, female guards were assigned to oversee women with cultural and linguistic backgrounds different from their own. As a result, female guards in Majdanek resorted to violence more often than in the camp at Ravensbrück where they had been trained. Mailänder presented a range of reactions to violence from prisoner victims as well as female perpetrators. While violence was socially accepted among female guards, not all used brutal methods. In their diverse practices, women succeeded in creating new norms of violence and reconceived institutional regulations to fit their desired behavior. The violence perpetrated was “in part a result of a complex interplay between institutional structure and individual agency.”

Although considered criminals in the post-war period, few female SS overseers were apprehended or brought to trial. And many of them experienced nostalgia for their time as guards. Mailänder asks that we look past the initial shock of such positive reminiscences and consider the advantages that Nazism promised female camp guards. Their occupation afforded them social power and financial stability, which offered significant motivation as well as the context for perpetrating violence. Mailänder’s presentation provided a nuanced and empathetic view of female perpetrators, while still acknowledging their individual agency as well as the social and institutional conditions of their behavior. Her work provides a valuable context for understanding the crimes they committed and illuminates why women committed such atrocities.

Dagmar Herzog, Distinguished Professor of History at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and a leading scholar on the history of sexuality in modern Europe, provided commentary that underscored important themes from Mailänder’s presentation. Herzog considered the connection between sex and violence, wondering, in the case of female perpetrators at Majdanek, whether the violence was sexual. In Mailänder’s estimation, many of the most brutal female guards were sadists in the sexual and pathological sense, further complicating our understanding of female perpetration. Herzog drew attention to the legacies of Majdanek by asking how the trial of perpetrators may have helped survivors and the post-war public make sense of the atrocities that had occurred. According to Mailänder, the trial of male and female Majdanek perpetrators has become a valuable resource because the testimonies were not cut short. The defendants were allowed to speak in order to establish a historical record. Strassler Center Director Thomas Kühne followed up on the subject of history and sources with a question: is there still more to be learned about female perpetrators? The answer from Mailänder and Herzog was unequivocally yes.
Judy Saryan and Dana Walrath, “Responding to Violence: Female Voices and the Armenian Genocide”

18 MARCH 2015

According to historian Barbara Merguerian, founder of the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA), female writers have long been prominent among Armenian intellectuals. Merguerian moderated a panel highlighting the voices of Armenian women that examined their responses to violence. Friends of the Robert and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephan and Marian Mugar Chair sponsored the well-attended panel discussion in the Rose Library. Merguerian initiated the discussion by describing how, by the mid-19th century, Armenian women were active in the socio-political life of Western Armenia. She pointed to Elbis Gesaratsian who in 1862 launched Guitar, the first Armenian women’s journal and the second-ever women’s journal published in the Ottoman Empire.

Armenian women authors have long raised awareness of crimes committed against them and the Armenian nation through writing, especially memoirs. Panelists Dana Walrath and Judy Saryan considered such literature and examined the interaction between history and writing. Central to the discussion were two literary works, produced far apart in time and very different in language, style, and tone. But, both examine violence and describe its impact on individual suffering. Significantly, both books focus on women and children who are often the primary victims of mass murder and genocide.

Judy Saryan, Director of the Zabel Yesayan Project, has published Yessayan’s oeuvre in English under the auspices of AIWA. The only woman among the Armenian intellectuals targeted for arrest and murder in April 1915, Yessayan escaped the genocide and eventually moved to Yerevan in the 1920s. Her brilliant but tragic life ended mysteriously during the Stalinist purges. Saryan presented her groundbreaking book, In the Ruins, describing atrocities perpetrated against the Armenians of Adana. In 1909, after the Adana massacres, the Patriarchate of Constantinople and the Armenian National delegation sent a Red Cross committee to Cilicia to provide aid to the needy and orphans. During her stay in Adana, Yessayan spoke to victims and recorded their testimonies. In her book, published in 1911, Yessayan describes personal tragedies and suffering typically overlooked in history books. She was especially attuned to women’s stories and, through her book, she gives them voice. Importantly, Yesayan does not advocate hatred; rather she seeks opportunities for forgiveness and reconciliation between ethnic groups living together for centuries.

Author, artist and anthropologist Dana Walrath discussed her novel Like Water on Stone, which fictionalizes the experiences of the author’s Armenian ancestors. During the genocide, Walrath’s grandmother Oghidar Troshagirian was just ten years old. After her parents’ murders, she and her siblings escaped to Aleppo, travelling by night, and eventually emigrated to America. Having learned that her family were millers in Balu, she considered telling their story in a fictionalized account. In 1984, Walrath visited Balu and inquired about the location of nearby mills and found one in the woods near a fast-flowing stream and the woman whose family then owned it. She said that the mill had belonged to Armenians sixty years earlier. “With anti-Armenian stories running through Turkish newspapers that summer, and all visible traces of Armenian inhabitants systematically denied or destroyed, I had hidden my identity as we traveled. But I told her the truth. We held each other’s gaze as the water hit the mill wheel and the stone of the stream. The official Turkish policy of genocide denial evaporated for one moment.” The experience inspired Walrath to write about the genocide from her grandmother’s perspective and to show how, despite the cruelties of genocide, survivors can persevere.

In the end, the panel participants agreed that, even if literature cannot be counted as a source for historians, it provides a place to raise the voices of victims (especially women and children), and it can serve as a tool to educate people not to stand by but to champion prevention.

Anna Aleksanyan

6 APRIL 2017

Human rights lawyer Andrea Gualde discussed the process of post-conflict justice in Argentina as the keynote address for the international conference Holding Accountability Accountable, with the support of an Anonymous Family Foundation. Gualde, currently the Senior Advisor for Latin America at the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, served as Argentina’s National Director of Legal Affairs in the Secretary of Human Rights from 2005-2013. She has written extensively on issues concerning human rights, restitution, memory, and social justice. Gualde described restorative justice following the end of the Military Junta (1976-1983) and the reinstatement of democracy in Argentina. She paid particular attention to how truth and historical memory about state terrorism have influenced criminal trials and reparations settlements.

Human rights organizations estimate that 30,000 Argentines were murdered during the campaign of state-sponsored terror aimed at leftist political opponents of the military government. In addition, 500 children were taken from their parents, and close to 40,000 people were forced to flee the country. In 1985, once democracy was restored under President Raúl Alfonsín, the chief perpetrators were put on trial and received prison terms of varying lengths. However, political upheavals dissuaded the government from pursuing further charges against mid-level perpetrators and collaborators. Eventually, even those convicted in 1985, received pardons, thus returning the perpetrators to freedom.

Despite these setbacks, the human rights movement, both inside Argentina and internationally, remained committed to bringing justice to the victims of the dictatorship. On the national level, several judges, in defiance of the impunity laws, established “truth trials,” which investigated victim claims. To be sure, without convictions or punitive consequences, such trials were a “half-measure,” Gualde declared. Crucially, however, they established the existence of crimes, contributing to the clarification of both the facts and those individuals responsible, and laid a foundation for later developments. Internationally, human rights organizations, led by the UN and the Organization of American States, helped generate momentum for justice. In 2003, with pressure from human rights organizations and international courts, the Argentine congress decreed the impunity laws null and void. In 2005, the Supreme Court upheld that decision, further ruling that the pardons had been unconstitutional. These decisions led to the reopening of criminal cases against the chief perpetrators, as well as new convictions against mid-level perpetrators and accomplices, who had escaped prosecution.

No longer limited to a narrowly defined category of perpetrators, these proceedings declared that all individuals responsible for crimes would be pursued and brought to justice. To reestablish confidence in the justice system, the courts went beyond providing reparations on the individual level, but sought to make a collective impact. Victim testimonies, in tandem with disclosures on the functioning of the terrorist state, raised public awareness of the regime’s crimes and contributed to the detection of sites where the atrocities were perpetrated. Many were transformed into sites of memory, and have become central to establishing public discourse about Argentina’s past. “The construction of collective memory,” Gualde asserted, “contributes to our ability to make sense of what occurred within the courtrooms and develop a narrative of the past that allows society to take responsibility for its history.” This process is crucial for it “restores the wounds of the direct victims and of the society who went through massive human rights violations.”

To date, 750 perpetrators have been convicted; 794 are still being prosecuted, and 77 have been released. As the Eichmann Trial in Jerusalem contributed to the development of the narrative record about the Holocaust for future Israeli generations, Gualde is optimistic that the ongoing trials can fundamentally change the way social justice and human rights are publicly discussed, thereby providing safeguards to the democratic state and the rule of law. Gualde’s exhaustive review of Argentina’s search for justice perfectly illustrated what it looks like to “hold accountability accountable.” She set the tone for a productive 3-day discussion about accountability for crimes that ranged through history and across the globe.

Michael Geheran
The Armenian Catholic priest, Father Krikor Guerguerian (1911-1983) was born to a large family in Gürün, Sivas. Having witnessed his parents’ murders, he dedicated himself to documenting the Armenian Genocide. Throughout his life, he tirelessly searched archives to collect pertinent documents in various languages. Most significantly, while conducting research in Cairo in the 1940s, Guerguerian encountered a former Ottoman judge, Mustafa Pasha, who had presided over postwar trials in Istanbul. The coincidence was the turning point in Guerguerian’s search for evidence. The judge told him that many boxes of trial documents were in the archives of the Armenian Patriarchate in Jerusalem. Guerguerian visited the archive in the 1960s and filmed all the materials, which served as the basis for a number of articles and a book he wrote about the Yozgat trial (1918-1919).

In 1983, the Armenian Assembly, based in Washington DC, microfilmed Guerguerian’s entire archive. Yet, due to an ineffective cataloging system, few scholars were able to examine the hundreds of microfilm rolls and they remained in relative obscurity. Finally, in 2015, Professor Taner Akçam gained permission to access the original archive in New York then in the possession of the Father’s elderly nephew, Dr. Edmund Guerguerian. Akçam immediately initiated efforts to make the materials widely accessible. He assembled a team of doctoral students, scholars, and experts in digitization. Berc Panossian was responsible for scanning the documents and creating the electronic archive. I am pleased to oversee the indexing process, which entails classifying the documents and preparing indexation templates for each file. I assign team members the files to index, which entails reading the documents, summarizing their contents, and assigning proper keywords. The project team includes my Strassler Center colleagues Anna Aleksanyan, Burçin Gerçek, and Ümit Kurt, PhD ’16; along with Nazi Temir Beyleryan, Tabita Toparlak, Sevan Değirmenciyan, and Omer Turkoğlu. Thanks to Professor Akçam’s leadership and the efforts of the team, we have meticulously read and systematically categorized tens of thousands of previously disorganized documents.

As the archive is vast, we divided the material into three categories. There are more than 1,000 Ottoman Turkish documents in the first category. We analyze and catalogue items according to which functionaries within the Ottoman bureaucracy wrote them and who received them. The second category contains the Armenian, French, English, Italian, and German documents Guerguerian gathered from various archives. The last category constitutes the largest part of the archive. It includes Guerguerian’s own notes along with Armenian, French, and English materials that he copied and translated from manuscripts and periodicals published in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In addition, this category includes Guerguerian’s incomplete book drafts as well as extensive articles probing the Armenian and French materials.

The Turkish and English indexes will eventually be online and will include keywords and detailed introductions for each document to facilitate research. After a considerable trial-test-control period, the full electronic archive will be accessible to researchers during 2018.

Access to the documents in the Krikor Guerguerian Archive will strike a blow to protracted Turkish denialism. What is more, the availability of so much fresh material will open up new vistas for research and boost the field of Armenian Genocide Studies. Just as the lifting of the Iron Curtain opened up research into the Holocaust in Eastern Europe as untouched archives became available, the Guerguerian Archive can stimulate new research and help to consolidate the growth of a young generation of Armenian Genocide scholars as they embark on their careers.

Emre Can Dağlioğlu
Strategic partnerships are essential to the development of the Strassler Center’s program and activities. Cooperating with colleagues at complementary institutions promotes valuable new ideas. A case in point: our work with the Brookline-based educational powerhouse Facing History and Ourselves (FHAO). A daylong workshop with CEO Roger Brooks and other FHAO leaders laid the ground for a joint initiative. We aim to build on the scholarly findings of our 2012 conference, Policy and Practice: Pedagogy about the Holocaust and Genocide, at which FHAO staff played a major part. At the same time, FHAO seeks to benefit from the cutting-edge research that our faculty and students conduct about a wide range of genocides and cases of mass violence. We are planning a multi-faceted approach to strengthening both organizations through a variety of joint efforts related to pedagogy over the coming years.

In addition to establishing linkages with external partners, a network of Strassler Center alumni in leadership positions bolster the program. Graduates hold appointments at the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation (AIPR), the Conference on Material Claims against Germany, the Holocaust Educational Foundation, the Rodger’s Center at Chapman University, the Stockton University Program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, the US Holocaust Memorial and Museum, and the Weiner Library in London. Dedicated to the continued success of the Strassler Center, PhD alumni are eager to collaborate on academic conferences, workshops, exhibitions, and publications. The April conference, Holding Accountability Accountable benefited from the advocacy of AIPR Executive Director Tibi Galis PhD ’15. The conference focused on emerging experts, a conscious emulation of AIPR’s approach to training mid-career officials. And we were pleased to have AIPR’s Latin America expert, Andrea Gualde, open the conference with a keynote address on the search for justice in Argentina. Deepening the partnership in the coming months, we will institute a fellows program for government officials from around the globe who have participated in AIPR workshops dedicated to education about the Holocaust and Genocide. We look forward to hosting AIPR fellows for semester long visits, as their practical experience in government and foreign affairs will enrich academic discourse.

The Strassler Center has long enjoyed linkages with compatible institutions around the globe. Thanks to funding from the Louis and Ann Kulin Endowment, we hosted a series of Graduate Student Conferences in cooperation with the Danish Institute for International Studies beginning in 2009. In spring 2018, we will organize the fourth conference as part of our Israel Academic Exchange (IAE). This ongoing collaboration with Israeli colleagues and institutions generated multi-day workshops in 2014 and 2015. In spring 2017, we hosted Hebrew University anthropologist Chen Bram as the Yossi and Dana Hollander IAE Visiting Professor. The next phase of cooperation will take place in partnership with Hebrew University Professors Daniel Blatman and Amos Oz. In keeping with efforts to engage alumni, Raz Segal PhD ’13, now the Sara and Sam Schoffer Professor of Holocaust Studies at Stockton University will serve as one of the discussants alongside his former colleagues at Hebrew University. Long eager to foster collaborative activities, Segal imagines additional joint initiatives between the Strassler Center and the program at Stockton University. We look forward to advancing these ideas into new collaborative programs.

Mary Jane Rein

We value the connections forged with partners near and far. And we recognize, with appreciation, those listed here.

Anti-Defamation League
The Armenian Genocide Museum Institute
Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation
Center for Holocaust Studies, Institute for Contemporary History, Munich
Conference on Material Claims against Germany
Danish Institute for International Studies
Facing History and Ourselves
Holocaust Educational Foundation
Hrant Dink Foundation
Institute for Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University
International Holocaust and Remembrance Alliance
The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous
The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust
National Association for Armenian Studies and Research
NICO Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies
Polin Museum
Rogers Center for Holocaust Education, Chapman University
The Sara & Sam Schoffer Holocaust Resource Center, Stockton University
School of Historical Studies, Tel Aviv University
Shoah Foundation Institute
United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum
Yad Vashem
Taner Akçam

Throughout his career, Professor Taner Akçam has steadfastly assembled a rich body of evidence demonstrating the Ottoman government’s systematic project to deport and murder its Armenian citizens and other Christian minorities. The discovery and publication of new documents continues apace as Akçam remains focused on establishing the historical record and ending Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. Ever committed to human rights and democracy, he also views an honest reckoning with the past as crucial to building a fair and just society.

As Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Professor in Armenian Genocide Studies, Akçam has recruited a cadre of talented PhD students working under his supervision on a range of topics related to the Armenian Genocide. In 2015, he began working with a team of doctoral students on the vast archive, long considered lost, that Father Krikor Guerguerian assembled. Many of the documents in this extensive collection of materials were known but considered lost. The entire archive will eventually be online thanks to the support of many organizations, including the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Calouste Gulbankian Foundation, the Knights & Daughters of Vartan, the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, the Jirair Nishanian Foundation, and Clark University’s Faculty Development Fund. Individual supporters include Hrant Gulian, Nazar and Artemis Nazarian, Harry and Suzanne Toufayan, and Hagop and Silva Bagdadlian.

Akçam’s team has scanned, classified, catalogued, transcribed, and translated a portion of the many thousands of pages in the archive. The project has two main objectives: to make the materials in the Guerguerian archive accessible to scholars and the interested public, as well as to edit and publish the documents. There are more than 500 uncategorized Ottoman documents, from the period of 1914 to 1921, some of which contain more than 6-7 pages. As the documents are frequently hand-written in Ottoman Turkish, a mixture of Persian, Arabic, and Turkish, in Arabic letters, Akçam collaborates with Ottoman experts to translate and transcribe the documents.

Among the materials in the Guerguerian Archive is a coded telegram with direct instructions to murder Armenian civilians. This highly incriminatory document, printed on Ottoman letterhead, has been authenticated by means of comparison to contemporary coded documents in the Ottoman archives. An April profile on the front page of the New York Times, which described the discovery and its historical significance, ignited interest from media outlets around the globe. Akçam describes the telegram as the “smoking gun” that definitively demonstrates that the Ottoman government was engaged in genocide.

The Guerguerian Archive includes other highly significant items that document the scope and implementation of the genocide, including the handwritten memoir of Naim Bey, an Ottoman bureaucrat stationed in Aleppo who handed over roughly 52 official documents to an Armenian intellectual, Aram Andonian. Some of these documents include killing orders. In addition, Naim Bey gave Andonian his personal memoirs which contain further evidence about the conduct of the genocide. Yet, Turkish critics have discredited the long-missing Naim Bey materials as Armenian forgeries. Akçam plans a series of books, the first of which appeared in Turkish in 2016. An English language version, The Naim Efendi Memoirs and Talat Pasha Telegrams, is forthcoming.

Akçam’s important discoveries from the Guerguerian Archive have generated significant interest around the globe. During a fall sabbatical, he traveled widely to discuss his findings in Boston, New York, and Los Angeles. In March 2017, he visited Armenian communities in Marseilles, Cannes, and Nice. In May, he participated in a research colloquium, Memory in Motion: Social Conflict and Politics of Memory at Humboldt University in Berlin, where he discussed Naim Efendi’s Memoir and the Talat Pasha Telegrams. With his interest in democracy building, Akçam often comments on current political developments. Thus, at the invitation of the Brussels Parliament, he discussed the current political situation in Turkey.

According to Akçam, his current project “is likely to produce a seismic shift not only in academia but also in the ongoing politics of denial.” While it is impossible to entirely eliminate denial, this work will topple some of the ideological pillars of the Turkish government’s century-long refusal to acknowledge the genocide.

Mary Jane Rein
Debórah Dwork

Founding Strassler Center Director and Rose Professor Debórah Dwork earned a much-deserved sabbatical for academic year 2016-17. After arriving at Clark University in fall 1996, she devoted two decades to serving as an entrepreneurial and visionary director. In fall 2016, upon stepping down from the directorship, she turned fully to her twin passions: writing books and mentoring students. Concerning the latter, she chaired ten dissertation committees, and co-chaired another. Taking this task seriously, Dwork stays in close contact with her doctoral advisees through regular skype meetings and frequent email updates to ensure their good progress. In addition, she maintains active communication with her graduated students as they advance their dissertation projects to book proposals and finally manuscripts. In addition, she takes a keen interest in helping them secure fellowships and post-docs, as well as first jobs and even second and third positions. The reward for writing roughly 150 letters of recommendation is a superb success rate due in large part to the students’ outstanding work but her rigorous mentoring is surely a key factor. She does all this while maintaining her own busy schedule of writing, presenting keynote lectures, travelling to archives, and consulting with diverse academic and non-profit organizations.

Dwork’s current book project, Saints and Liars, examines American rescuers who saved Jews during the Holocaust. It now has taken shape, with a table of contents, a clear narrative line, and a number of invited lectures on it scheduled for 2017-2018. Fall 2016 began with an exciting development regarding her scholarship on American rescuers. As the historian of record on screen and off for the documentary film by Ken Burns and Artemis Joukowsky, Defying the Nazis: The Sharps’ War, Dwork attended the September premiere at the Obama White House. An earlier screening at the US Holocaust Memorial and Museum gave her the opportunity to watch the film with Center alumni who work at the Museum, Elizabeth Anthony PhD ’16, Jonathan Edelman ’16, and Natalya Lazar (ABD). Saints and Liars will dominate Dwork’s agenda next year as she continues her leave from the Strassler Center. Invited to serve as the J.B. and Maurice C. Shapiro Senior Scholar-in-Residence at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum for 2017-18, she will devote herself to moving the book forward. It will share space with USHMM projects: a major exhibition on America and the Holocaust, and a redesign of the core exhibit.

While writing and mentoring share the forefront of her busy schedule, Dwork also consults and participates in important initiatives at home and abroad. Appointed a member of the US Delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA; formerly ITF), and assigned to the Academic Working Group, her tasks include reviewing and adding to numerous US Country Reports. Her other committee appointments include the Steering Committee of the Holocaust Education Research Project and the Funding Review Committee. During her term on the team of the Holocaust Education Research Project (2013-2017), the Steering Committee oversaw a huge, multi-national project to map current scholarship in the field of Holocaust and genocide pedagogy. The final report was published in 2017. Her term on the Funding Review Committee (2017-2019) will entail reviewing proposals from around the world. She also chairs a subcommittee charged with ascertaining the state of the field and employment opportunities in IHRA countries. And she is a member of the Committee on Holocaust, Genocide, and Crimes against Humanity.

Dwork is a great fan of the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights, and Genocide Education (Chhange), at Brookdale Community College in NJ and its permanent exhibition, A Journey to Life. As the historian expert working with the director and associate director, she had the opportunity to bring Sara Brown PhD ’16 (expertise in the Rwanda Genocide), Khatchig Mouradian PhD ’16 (expertise in the Armenian Genocide), and Naama Haviv ’00 MA ’06 (expertise on citizen involvement) to work with Chhange. Another favorite organization is the Museum of Jewish Heritage (NY), where she lectures in their teacher education outreach programs, public programs, and advises their staff on teacher programs.

Finally, the most significant (in the long-term) professional service with which she remains engaged is political activity on behalf of scholars and scholarship. Fighting against executive orders, actions, and budgets that have a deleterious effect on intellectual and cultural institutions as well as academics and artists, claims hours of time every single day. As does fighting for key rights and freedoms, upon which scholarly activity depends.

Mary Jane Rein
Thomas Kühne

How do ordinary people become mass murderers? And how do the similarly “ordinary” people around the murderers get away with remaining passive? What prevents intervention, and how do bystanders justify their inaction in the aftermath of violence? Director of the Strassler Center and Strassler Professor of Holocaust History Thomas Kühne has long been interested in these questions, and has made them the subject of his most recent book, The Rise and Fall of Comradeship: Hitler’s Soldiers, Male Bonding, and Mass Violence in the Twentieth Century (Cambridge University Press 2017).

In The Rise and Fall of Comradeship, Kühne builds upon two decades of research on the subject of male bonding and military culture in the Third Reich. Having published extensively in German, this book is his second in English on the topic. He uses diaries, letters, and memoirs of “ordinary soldiers” to explore why some men participated in the murder of Jews, or idly stood by as it happened. He argues that they did so for the same reason that they refused to surrender until long after it was clear that the war was over: comradeship. Kühne explores how these men’s conceptualizations of themselves as loyal comrades allowed them to deny personal responsibility for the atrocities they committed, observed, or applauded. Brown University Professor Omer Bartov described the book as, “an original, comprehensive, and incisive analysis of the concept, myth, reality, and ultimate disintegration of soldiers’ comradeship in modern Germany and its profound implications. Set within the larger context of European and American ideas and practices of military cohesion, this is an important book that should be read by all students of modern and military history.”

In addition to historical research, Kühne is a keen observer of contemporary academic and political debates on the legacy of Hitler and the Holocaust. Writing about the recently published and controversial edition of Mein Kampf for the leading German historical journal, Historische Zeitschrift, he argued that it needs to be understood as part of a global tendency to relativize the critical memory of Hitler. In a letter to the Wall Street Journal (March 2017), “Beware of the Dismissal of Germany’s Nazi Past,” Kühne argues for positioning the growing German far-right party, Alternative for Germany, within a larger context of resentment towards acknowledging and taking responsibility for Nazi atrocities that has been a facet of German society since the end of World War II. Kühne argues that what has changed is that these ideas and the people advancing them are no longer contained to a fringe within German moderate conservatism. Rather, with Alternative for Germany, they have their own political party and platform, and thus to a worrying degree, legitimacy, especially following their success in the recent elections.

As Director of Graduate Studies, Kühne has long been devoted to his students and to bolstering the Center’s reputation. In addition to supervising seven dissertations, he aims to continue to attract competitive doctoral applicants. He also works toward establishing meaningful linkages to strengthen the academic vibrancy of the Ph.D. program. In fall 2016, he invited preeminent Holocaust scholar, Christopher Browning, author of the landmark study, Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland, to give a public lecture and lead a doctoral student workshop. Kühne described the workshop as “immensely profitable.” He plans to offer further opportunities for doctoral students to meet and work with outstanding scholars from other institutions.

Having assumed its directorship in June 2016, Kühne is committed to growing the Strassler Center. In order to build a truly comprehensive program, he seeks to broaden the range of cases of mass violence researched at the Center and to further develop the methodological approaches that are necessary to explain them. He has already incorporated research into genocidal violence perpetrated against Native Americans into programming. And he is eager to strengthen faculty expertise to include the history of genocide and mass violence in Africa, the Americas, Asia, and the Middle East, as well as the history of human rights. To that end, he has helped to launch a Leadership Council of alumni and friends to raise the Center’s resources and reputation. With their help, he looks forward to steadily advancing the Center in the years to come.

Meghan Paradis ‘17
ties in the world due to fighting between the Burmese military and non-state armed groups. Humanitarian efforts are stalled and non-strategic areas remain contaminated with mines that prevent people from resuming their livelihoods. During the summer, MacLean carried out research in Burma and Thailand on the legacies of the conflict. In spring, around 400,000 Burmese people remained displaced by violence and around 100,000 refugees on the Thai border worried about returning home, in part because of the danger of land mines. In fall, the situation for the Rohingya Muslim minority, targeted by the military, worsened to disastrous proportions.

The spring semester proved especially busy for MacLean who served as faculty organizer for the April conference Holding Accountability Accountable. During his sabbatical, he was fully engaged in planning with help from Center staff and especially conference intern Spencer Cronin ’18. The conference focused on bringing together young scholars and practitioners who study how individuals, governments, corporations, and societies are held to account following genocide or mass atrocities. Assembling a diverse group of lawyers and NGO professionals with their different experiences, knowledge, and jargon specific to their fields, proved valuable. Business cards were exchanged and collaborative plans hatched. The closing panel showed that agreement on how to achieve accountability is not easily reached but putting experts into conversation across fields and a wide range of cases advanced the conversation.

MacLean genuinely values teaching and advising students. He chairs the dissertation committees for two PhD students. Mohamnad Sajjadur Rahman researches the 1971 genocide in Bangladesh and Samantha Lakin examines symbolic justice in post-genocide Rwanda. Supervising directed studies with his doctoral advisees, MacLean worked individually with them on the history of mass violence in Asia as well as on memory politics and transitional justice. A genuine concern about food justice grows out of MacLean’s engagement with issues of humanitarianism. He is the faculty representative to the Food Services Working Group, which seeks to procure more locally grown and organic food products, support local businesses, and provide healthier food on campus. A fall seminar, “The Political Economy of Food and the Ethics of Eating,” will allow him to examine these matters in greater depth.

MacLean’s teaching, service, and scholarship bring new areas of research and fresh methodological approaches to the attention of the Strassler Center community. He is a valued colleague, teacher, and scholar.

Hannah King ’19

Ken MacLean

An anthropologist with a focus on Southeast Asia, Professor Ken MacLean appreciated a fall sabbatical in Kyoto, Japan where he held a Visiting Research Fellowship at the Center for Southeast Asian Studies at Kyoto University. The experience was enriched by his children, ages 11 and 14, who joined him. They travelled extensively, sampled amazing delicacies, and participated fully in Japanese life. Highlights were a festival on the coast near Tokyo for the guardian that protects fishermen at sea, and Japanese New Year celebrated at a Buddhist temple with a monk chanting, praying, and ringing a gong. MacLean was fortunate to experience two spectacular Japanese falls: first while at a workshop held in the mountains where the leaves turned early and, a month later, he enjoyed the reds, golds, and rust colored leaves in Kyoto.

Freedom from teaching and university service permitted time for research and writing on mass violence and humanitarian efforts in SE Asia. Two articles are currently under review for publication. His study of police torture in Vietnam examines media strategies deployed to capture brutality perpetrated against citizens. Another article investigates human trafficking of women and girls from Vietnam to China. His book project, Search and Destroy: Burma/Myanmar and Human Rights Fact Production, looks at the ongoing conflict in Burma where control over valuable natural resources fuels violence between diverse ethnic groups. Burma has the third highest rate of land mine casual-
Shelly Tenenbaum

Every Wednesday during the spring semester, Clark University Sociology Professor Shelly Tenenbaum needed to remember to leave cell phone, wallet, pen, hat and gloves behind before she went to work. She also could not wear a jacket with a hood. Her class could be postponed because of a lockdown, and a student’s absenteeism might be attributed to time spent in solitary confinement.

Tenenbaum, director of Clark’s Holocaust and Genocide Studies undergraduate program, spent part of her sabbatical year teaching a course on comparative genocide in a college program to students at the Massachusetts Correctional Institute – Norfolk, an all-male medium-security prison 50 minutes southeast of Worcester. She worked as a faculty member in Boston University’s Prison Education Program.

Along with teaching assistants Claude Kaitare ’05 and Boston University PhD candidate Amanda Napior, Tenenbaum brought many of the lessons from her genocide classes at Clark into the Norfolk prison block.

“I love teaching at Clark,” Tenenbaum says, “but I was ready for a new teaching experience, new challenges. This sabbatical offered an opportunity to act on that interest.”

Tenenbaum relished the change of environment, and was impressed by the inmates’ engagement with the material. The experience may even help reshape the way she teaches future introductory genocide courses at Clark, she says. At the very least, it left her examining the language she uses when discussing genocides throughout history.

Tenenbaum walked into the classroom with the “excited anxiety” of teaching inmates topics like the Stanford Prison Experiment — an influential 1971 social experiment in which college students acting as jailers abused other students portraying prisoners. Would that discussion be problematic for her Norfolk students in ways that it would not be for Clark students?

Ultimately, the anxiety only energized the classroom give-and-take. “In the prison classroom, there was comfort with disagreement, but without an edge,” she says. The students were respectful but asked probing questions about the nature of genocide and drew parallels to American history and contemporary life.

Kaitare brought first-hand experience to the subject matter. A survivor of the Rwandan Genocide, he arrived at Clark in 2001 as a pre-med major, wanting to avoid reminders of what he’d fled. By sophomore year, his attitude had changed. Needing to fulfill electives, he signed up for Tenenbaum’s comparative genocide course and eventually switched his major to history, forgoing his pre-med scholarship money to do so.

For the first time, Kaitare was able to process the horror he had witnessed from an entirely new perspective — with an awareness of genocides that had occurred in other countries. “I thought Rwanda was unique,” he says. He describes the comparative aspect of Tenenbaum’s course as “therapeutic” because he could connect his personal experience to other places and time periods.

At MCI – Norfolk, Kaitare says, the older students were aware of Rwanda’s history. As for the younger students, “I had to show them on a map where Rwanda is.”

“Connections happened,” he says. “When we talked in groups I could figure out how they were understanding it.”

Tenenbaum had broader ambitions than simply teaching a new demographic of students. Like any good sociologist, she was researching as well, hoping to examine how the course changes when she presents material to students from different backgrounds. Does it make her more thoughtful in her language, for instance? Does she respond to the source material differently? What kinds of questions does she receive from one section of students versus the other?

“If I always teach at one place I’d never notice that,” she says.

Eventually, Tenenbaum would like Clark to look into starting a similar extension program, or at the very least bring more Clark students into her classes at MCI – Norfolk (or possibly MCI – Framingham, a women’s prison).

For Kaitare, who works with the school-outreach organization Facing History and Ourselves and studies in Salem State University’s graduate-level Holocaust and Genocide certificate program, his ultimate goal doesn’t require extensive field notes.

“Ignorance is the root cause of all big problems in our society,” he says. “I raise awareness in hopes of eradicating ignorance.”

Jeremy Shulkin ’07, M.A.T. ’08
Program Faculty

We are grateful to the following faculty for their contributions of scholarship, expertise, and teaching.

Taner Akçam, PhD, History Department
Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Professor of Armenian Genocide Studies and Modern Armenian History

Katerine Bielaczyc, PhD, Department of Education
Director of the Hiatt Center for Urban Education
Associate Professor of Education

Deborah Dwork, PhD, History Department
Rose Professor of Holocaust History

Jody Emel, PhD, Graduate School of Geography
Professor of Geography

Anita Fábos, PhD, Department of International Development and Social Change
Associate Professor of International Development and Social Change

Everett Fox, PhD, Department of Language, Literature and Culture
Director, Jewish Studies Concentration
Allen M. Glick Chair in Judaic and Biblical Studies

Thomas Kühne, PhD, History Department
Strassler Professor of Holocaust History
Director, Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

Olga Litvak, PhD, History Department
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Professor of Political Science

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Professor of Sociology

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Johanna Ray Vollhardt, PhD, Francis L. Hiatt School of Psychology
Associate Professor of Psychology

Kristen Williams, PhD, Political Science Department
Professor of Political Science
Graduate Student News

The Strassler Center enrolls exceptional PhD students who seek doctoral training with our internationally prominent faculty. They aspire to careers as scholars, historians, museum specialists, and activists. As professionals, they will provide expertise to Holocaust and genocide museums, memorials, education initiatives, and human services organizations around the globe. They will advance the field of Holocaust and Genocide Studies as well as enhance the education of teachers, students, and the public. To do so, they engage in a rigorous five-year program of study, research, and fieldwork in order to produce original results and valuable insights into the violent past.

The academic and professional accomplishments of current students and graduates of the Strassler Center are manifestations of the doctoral program’s success. They secure prestigious fellowships and travel the globe to present their research. Their work gains them access to important archives, which they are sometimes the first to explore. They not only participate as presenters in conferences but also serve as organizers, committee members, and catalysts. Current doctoral projects explore genocide, its causes, conduct, and aftermath in Argentina, Armenia, Bangladesh, Croatia, Germany, Iran, Israel, Poland, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Turkey, and Ukraine. Their impressive accomplishments from the 2016-17 academic year are summarized here.

Harry and Ovsanna Chitjian Fellow Anna Aleksanyan successfully completed her oral comprehensive exams and turned full time to her dissertation, Gendered Aspects of the Armenian Genocide in the Experiences of its Female Victims. Aleksanyan researches the genocidal experiences of Armenian women as well as efforts to recover their identity after the war. The Turkish Union and Progress Party began the genocide with the mass killing of Armenian men. By contrast, the government policy for women and children was deportation. Exiled to the desert, women were subject to mass humiliation, rape, starvation, and killings. Turkish gendarmes and Kurdish criminals kidnapped Armenian girls and women and forcibly married or enslaved them. Many women “voluntarily” married Turks, Kurds, or Arabs to rescue their relatives; often they had to change their religion and forget their names and identity in order to survive. Aleksanyan examines rape, sexual abuse, sexual slavery, and forced prostitution in the light of pre-genocidal gender dynamics, cultural practices, and political economies. Her work shows how sexual violence became a genocidal weapon.

During the summer months, Aleksanyan advanced her project through research and study. She travelled to Yerevan to work in the archives at the Mesrop Mashtots Institute of Ancient Manuscripts, commonly referred to as the Matenadaran, and the Armenian Genocide Museum. In Paris, she conducted archival research in the Nubarian Library. Aleksanyan attended the Venice School of Human Rights program Sexual Violence in Conflict in a Changing Global Environment.

In addition to her dissertation work, Aleksanyan has begun to publish her research. She submitted an article “Ruben Heryan: Liberator of Armenian Women and Children after the Genocide,” to a special issue of the Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association (November 2017). She is also completing an article, “Between Love, Pain and Identity: Armenian Women after WWI,” for the volume Women’s Everyday Life and Politics in the South Caucasus (Palgrave Macmillan 2018). Aleksanyan is also part of the team contributing to Professor Taner Akçam’s Krikor Guergerian Archive Project. The materials from this significant archive will soon be online and they have the potential to transform research on the Armenian Genocide and to silence deniers. She is responsible for indexing Armenian documents and she is preparing an article based on the material.

While working on the Guergerian materials, she discovered the record of a Turkish eyewitness in the province of Erzincan who testified against Turkish perpetrators. He witnessed the deportation of Armenians, the plunder of their property, public rape and forced marriage. She also found the rare unpublished memoir of an Armenian

Anna Aleksanyan (center) with dissertation committee members Professors Lerna Ekmeçioğlu (left) and Cynthia Enloe (right)
In Munich she reviewed a database for Nazi trial records and traced the relevant proceedings to uncover testimonies and verdicts of former EG members. Armelin reviewed pertinent trial records found in various archives across different German provinces. The testimonies also contain valuable demographic information. Previously, Armelin collected details such as members’ birthplace, education level, socio-economic status, and the circumstances that led to their joining the SS, police, and the Einsatzgruppen. She will analyze the data to determine the demographic characteristics of the units, as well as the different professional affiliations, including SD officers, Gestapo, Kripo, and Waffen-SS members.

The spring conference, As Mass Murder Began: Identifying and Remembering the Killing Sites of Summer-Fall 1941, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, gave Armelin the opportunity to present preliminary findings. Her paper, “Karl Jäger’s Einsatzkommando 3 and the Holocaust in Vilnius,” generated valuable discussion.

Agnes Manoogian Haurath Fellow Emre Can Dağlioğlu, having completed his doctoral coursework, turns to drafting his dissertation proposal. His research examines the tangled game of reform for Armenian subjects, first stipulated between the Ottoman Empire and Great Powers by the St. Stefano Agreement and 1878 Berlin Conference. He seeks to understand the impact that Western pressure and Muslim resentment had on Ottoman policy against Armenians in 1895-96. In order to determine how the interplay between reform and massacres resonated at the local level, he will research the microhistory of Trebizond, the Black Sea city at the crossroads of historically significant trade routes. The Knights of Vartan Fund for Armenian Studies and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research (NAASR) supported the first phase of research in the archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (Boston) and the archives at Harvard University. Documents from Turkish, Armenian, American, British, French, and Vatican archives will also prove essential to his project.

In addition to his doctoral research, Dağlioğlu works closely with his adviser, Professor Taner Akçam, on the preparation of documents for the online publication of the Guerguerian Archive. He coordinates
the classification and indexing of materials. Drawing on findings from that archive, he gave a presentation at the 39th Annual Susman Graduate Student Conference at Rutgers University. His paper, “On the Track of the Aghtamar Catholicos Khachadur III: Rethinking Intra-Imperial Space of Ottoman Empire and Armenian Subjecthood,” was selected for publication in a special journal volume. Based upon materials found in the Guergerian Archive, he will also publish an article examining Khatchadur’s report on the 1895 anti-Armenian massacre in Van in the July issue of Toplumsal Tarih, the most popular Turkish history journal.

During the summer months, Dağlioğlu received funding from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation to improve his Armenian language skills at the Western Armenian Summer Intensive Course at the University of London. Finally, with the help of a private tutor, he tackled the difficult but valuable task of improving his Ottoman-Turkish reading skills. Dağlioğlu delivered a paper, “A Rehearsal for Genocide? The 1895-96 Massacres in the Armenian Genocide Historiography,” at the Workshop on Armenian Turkish Scholarship in Berlin, Germany. His research on more recent Turkish history will appear as two book chapters. The first describes how the September 12th military coup re-shaped Turkish-Armenian identity during the period 1980-83 (to be published in Critical Approaches to the Armenian Identity in the 21st Century, Hrant Dink Foundation Publications). The other examines Turkish leftist movements in the 1960s and their apathy toward the minority question (to be published in 1964 Expulsions: A Turning Point in Homogenization of Turkish Society, Istanbul Bilgi University Press).

T. McBane Fellow Asya Darbinyan explores Russian responses to the Armenian Genocide for her dissertation project. Drawing upon Armenian, Georgian, and Russian primary sources, she scrutinizes the process of refugee movement in 1914-1917 resulting from the massacres of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire and the warfare on the Caucasus front of the Great War. Exploring the dynamics of the Armenian refugee crisis, she addresses core questions of motivation, decision-making, and implementation of humanitarian assistance and relief work by Russian civil and military authorities. Drilling down on these issues, she seeks a new understanding of theoretical concepts, including humanitarianism and altruism vs. imperial policy and colonization; refugee flow and relief work vs. population migration and displacement by “military necessity”; refugee status and refugee rights during the Great War period vs. refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced peoples (after the 1951 Convention on Refugees).

During a spring trip to Tbilisi, Georgia supported by a grant from NAASR, Darbinyan visited the National Central Historical Archive and the National Parliamentary Library. She examined the files of the Executive Committee of the Council for Refugee Assistance on the Caucasus Front, including documents describing refugee conditions, relief work, and medical assistance to refugees in Russian Armenia, as well as at the Caucasus battlefront, and in Eastern Turkish territories occupied by Russian imperial troops. The collection provides insights into the peculiarities of Russian imperial humanitarianism and a view into the complexity of the relief work and the roles played by Russian and Armenian organizations. The National Parliamentary Library also contains copies of wartime newspapers published in Tbilisi, which describe conditions and assistance to Armenian refugees.

Darbinyan continued her research in libraries and archives in Yerevan. She collected memoirs housed at the Armenian Genocide Museum-Institute’s library, written by Ottoman Armenians forced to flee Eastern Turkey across the Ottoman-Russian border to reach a relatively safer place with the assistance of Russians and their compatriots from Eastern Armenia. Darbinyan aims to ‘give voice’ to the refugees, the objects of humanitarianism, in order to understand their perceptions of the crisis and relief work, and to highlight their agency in the struggle to survive.

Darbinyan was pleased to attend the 9th European Spring School on History of Science and Popularization held in Maó, Spain. As part of the conference Living in Emergency: Humanitarianism and Medicine, she presented “Historical Perspective on Russian Humanitarian Medicine: Assistance to Armenian Refugees during the Great War.” She then participated in the Global Humanitarianism Research Academy (GHRA) held at the Leibniz Institute of European History Mainz.
and visited the Archives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The GHRA program gathered graduate students and experts in the field of humanitarianism from around the world to discuss their work in the context of international, imperial, and global history. In addition, participants gained access to the ICRC Archives and Libraries where Darbinyan found correspondence between the Russian Red Cross and the ICRC about refugee assistance. These research and academic opportunities contributed to her great progress in advancing her dissertation project.

**Burçin Gerçek** completed her first year of doctoral study with the support of the Charlotte Calfaian Fellowship. With a background in political science and journalism, Gerçek previously served as Istanbul correspondent (2002-2016), for the French newspapers L’Express and Ouest France. She also specialized in Turkish-Armenian issues for the online magazine Repair. In addition, she researched “righteous rescuers” during the Armenian genocide and wrote several articles on the subject. A report about righteous Muslims submitted to the Raoul Wallenberg Foundation was the basis for her November 2016 book, in Turkish, *Against the Current: Rescuers, Resisters and those who Opposed Orders during the Armenian Genocide*. The book describes rescuers who aided Armenians throughout the Ottoman provinces. It also includes information about the rescuers’ lives during the first years of the Turkish Republic and interviews with their descendants. During the fall, she presented, “Three Rescue and Resistance Stories in the Testimonies of Survivors from Muradiye, Müküş and Ercis during the Armenian Genocide,” at a conference in Istanbul organized by the Hrant Dink Foundation.

For her dissertation, Gerçek plans to research perpetrators of the genocide in the Ankara province. She will focus on their mindset and analyze their subsequent political trajectory. An important aspect of her project will be to determine the role of perpetrators in the construction of the Turkish Republic and their influence on the development of state policies. Although, after 1926, there was a considerable purge of Young Turks from among the Republican elite, the ideology and influence of the Union and Progress Party had a decisive impact in shaping how to govern Turkey and this legacy continues up to the present. Impunity for the crimes of 1915 paved the way for a society where impunity was normalized in all areas of political and social life, especially when it came to crimes committed against non-Turks and non-Muslims.

During the summer, Gerçek examined articles published in the Ottoman press from 1919-1922 about the perpetrator trials. She also continued indexing and standardizing the English and French language documents in the Guerguerian Archive. She is writing an article about the origins, the characteristics, and the thematic distribution of the French documents in the archive. The Guerguerian archive is an important resource for her research. Most interesting for her are the reports sent to the Armenian Patriarchate in Istanbul from all the provinces between 1918-1922 about the situation of Armenians and other Christian communities after the ceasefire. These reports include detailed portraits of perpetrators and emphasize that Armenian survivors who returned home after the war were targets during the struggle led by Mustafa Kemal against the allies. Indeed, many perpetrators of the Armenian genocide served in Kemal’s forces.

Gerçek began to work in Turkish archives during the summer months. She also continued her efforts to learn Armenian and began to study Ottoman Turkish in order to be able to read documents in the Ottoman archive, newspaper articles, and testimonies necessary for her research.

**Simon Goldberg** received the Samuel and Anna Jacobs research award and funding for research from the Cutler Charitable Foundation. For his MA thesis at Haifa University, Goldberg researched Holocaust victims’ deportation experiences. Looking at transport through both a historical and a literary lens, he examined letters written aboard trains en route to concentration and death camps alongside Israeli poet Dan Pagis’s iconic poem, “Written in Pencil in the Sealed Railway Car.” His study yielded insights about deportees’ responses to the bodily and sensory assaults they experienced, as well as questions concerning awareness of their intended fate.

For his dissertation, Goldberg explores how Lithuanian Jews...
obtained, compiled, and interpreted information under the German occupation. While historians have documented the perpetrators’ coordinated secrecy around the Final Solution, the dynamics governing the flow of information and knowledge-production within wartime Jewish communities have garnered little attention. Goldberg’s dissertation examines the nature, scope, and methods of Jews’ documentation projects in the Shavli and Kovno ghettos. His research situates these projects within the traditions of record keeping, archiving, and history writing that developed in interwar Lithuania, and explores how they functioned in extremis. What role did Shavli and Kovno Jews imagine for the archives they sought to create? What do extant records indicate about their access to information and the hermeneutics they used to assign meaning? Goldberg analyzes the various technical, stylistic, and linguistic decisions made by wartime historians and archivists while processing information, and examines how their efforts evolved over the course of the German occupation.

Goldberg’s participation in the Dissertation and Thesis Development Workshop at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2016, allowed him to identify archival collections relevant to his dissertation project. He read materials from the Sutzkever-Kaczerginski collection, which contains unpublished diaries written in the Vilna ghetto, and compiled materials from the Lithuanian Central State Archives, which holds letters written by Jews who had been deported from Lithuania, as well as unpublished manuscripts. A trip to Yad Vashem enabled him to review documents pertaining to Eliezer Yerushalmi, who wrote clandestinely in the Shavli ghetto and amassed a vast archive to document the war years.

During summer, Goldberg travelled to Lithuania to continue his research in three archives. At the National Library in Vilnius, he studied texts written by Jewish historians in interwar Lithuania. At the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum, he explored documents and other extant records from Shavli and Kovno, as well as perused a collection of survivor testimonies held at the Museum. Finally, at the Lithuanian Central State Archives, Goldberg examined diaries, letters, and administrative files that shed light on Jews’ documentation efforts from 1941 to 1944.

The summer presented opportunities for professional and academic development. In June, Goldberg joined alumni of Paideia, the European Institute for Jewish Studies in Sweden, for a conference in Berlin. As the recipient of a highly competitive Wexner Graduate Fellowship, Goldberg also returned to Stowe, Vermont, for his third Fellows’ Institute.

Gabrielle Hauth was pleased to hold the Sidney and Rosalie Rose Fellowship for her third year of doctoral study as she successfully completed her comprehensive exams and dissertation prospectus. Her project, Intimacy in Ravensbrück: Sex, Violence, and Survival in a Nazi Concentration Camp, examines intimate relations during the Holocaust, focusing specifically on concentration camps. The dynamics of this environment challenged civilian sexual norms. Her study looks specifically at Ravensbrück, a camp that in the latter part of the war held male and female prisoners, in order to explore how intimacy functioned in that violent atmosphere and affected the everyday experiences of prisoners and perpetrators. Challenging the linear model of sexuality often understood in terms of force, coercion, and consent, Hauth develops a mosaic of sexual experiences that illuminates the roles of agency and power in camp society. She examines both prisoners and guards— their relationships with those of their own group as well as relationships between members of different groups. This little examined aspect of concentration camp life confronts stereotypes of heroic victims and morally compromised survivors to highlight prisoners’ nuanced experiences.

Hauth researches primary sources, such as memoirs, prisoner testimonies, and trial records. Her work yielded a particularly interesting case. During his employment at Ravensbrück, SS Doctor Rolf Rosenthal was arrested for his sexual relationship with prisoner nurse Gerda Quernheim. The SS and police court in Berlin sentenced him to eight and a half years in a concentration camp. Rosenthal appealed his sentence and Himmler reviewed his plea, which included written testimony from Quernheim who explained that the relationship was both emotionally and physically intimate.

Further inspection of primary sources should provide more material for analyzing different relationship dynamics. Hauth explores a num-
Emil Kjerte is a Claims Conference Fellow interested in researching perpetrators of genocide and mass violence. He earned a BA in history from the University of Copenhagen, where his thesis on the SS Einsatzgruppen focused on the dynamics that escalated the killings and the motivations for committing heinous atrocities. For his MA thesis in Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Uppsala University, he compared the My Lai massacre, perpetrated by American soldiers during the war in Vietnam, with a massacre committed by German Order Police in the Polish city of Bialystok at the beginning of the Nazi invasion of the Soviet Union. His research, using trial documents, revealed differences in how the atrocities were organized and highlighted different perpetrator behavioral patterns.

During his first year of doctoral study, Kjerte continued to pursue comparative research. For his dissertation, he plans to compare the Ustaška vojnica – the Ustaše Defense Militia – with the SS Death’s Head Units. Both paramilitary organizations were responsible for operating concentration and extermination camps and Kjerte seeks to explore the mindsets of their officers. Examining concepts such as honor, obedience, and hardness, he will analyze the ethos that guided the actions of these men. By using a comparative approach, the dissertation will assess to what extent the Ustaška vojnica appropriated ideological elements integral to the mentality of the Death’s Head Units. His work will contribute to the study of the Nazi regime’s interaction with collaborative actors and the transnational dimensions of the Holocaust.

For primary source materials, Kjerte will draw on records and interrogation statements from the post-war trials conducted in the Federal Republic of Germany and the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. He also plans to utilize reports of the post-war Yugoslavia state commission on war crimes, which investigated atrocities perpetrated during the war and provided evidence for legal proceedings. To prepare for this research, he spent two months attending a language school in Belgrade to strengthen his Serbo-Croatian.

As Kjerte broadened his knowledge about the dynamics of genocide, he continued to learn about the Nazi perpetrators. He gained new insights into the critical role of the collaborators in the implementation of the Holocaust. His studies at the Strassler Center challenge him to reflect upon the ethical issues involved in writing about perpetrators. He remains thoughtful about sensible modes of representing the subject without shying away from describing the violence while avoiding overtly graphic and sensational depictions.
STUDENT & ALUMNI NEWS

Samantha Lakin, the Cummings Fellow in Comparative Genocide Studies, continues to make excellent progress in her doctoral research with the added support of the Ronald and Deborah Ratner Family Foundation. Her dissertation, *An Analysis of Transitional Justice and Memorialization in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, analyzes local perspectives toward symbolic justice. To date, there has not been a systematic analysis of symbolic justice initiatives in Rwanda. She examines memorialization, commemoration, and personal memory practices following genocide and mass atrocities with a focus on the aftermath of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda.

Lakin observes that in cases of extraordinary violence, international courts focused on punishing perpetrators are favored over symbolic measures that strive to help victims recover from trauma. Her preliminary research, as well as existing literature, suggest that symbolic forms of justice can have a positive impact on people who seek redress and healing outside of legal channels. Yet, very little research has explored this complicated process. Her study will contribute to it in two ways. First, it will provide insight into how genocide survivors, former perpetrators, ordinary citizens, and state officials understand and utilize symbolic justice to achieve their respective goals. Second, the focus on memorialization, commemoration, and personal memory practices will illustrate how efforts to achieve justice through symbolic means can inform existing theories of transitional justice. In Rwanda, as in most post-conflict societies, actors construct narratives to meet their goals of grief, mourning, justice, and development. People may attend the same commemorative events yet remember different things. Informed by this reality, Lakin researches how Rwandans talk about their experiences at memorial sites and commemorations, their relationship to justice, what subjects are taboo, what they say and leave unsaid about Rwandan memorial culture?

Having passed her comprehensive exams and defended her dissertation prospectus, Lakin happily spent the spring as a Transitional Justice Research Fellow at the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam. As she moves into the research phase of her project, she has secured fellowships from the Boren Foundation and Fulbright to carry out research in Rwanda. Her fieldwork will entail conducting open-ended interviews, archival document review (speeches, written testimonies, etc.), and direct observation of commemorative and memorial practices. Documenting differences between how genocide survivors, former perpetrators, ordinary citizens, and state entities respond will shape a new understanding of post-conflict recovery, which can inform policymakers.

Lakin presented a paper at the spring conference *Large-Scale Violence and Its Aftermaths*, organized by the Kean University Holocaust and Genocides Studies Program, the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, and Cardozo Law School’s Benjamin Ferencz Human Rights and Atrocity Prevention Clinic. In summer, she travelled to Ile-Ife, Nigeria to participate in a two-week seminar, the first of its kind, at the Obafemi Awolowo University. This international seminar provided training in theoretical and methodological approaches, as well as professional skills, to an interdisciplinary group of doctoral students.

Abigail Miller holds the Tapper Fellowship as she continues her doctoral research. Having passed her exams and defended the prospectus for her dissertation, *The Transmission of Holocaust Memory in Argentina: From the Refugee Survivors to the Generation of the Disappeared*, she began analyzing materials already collected and conducting further research in archives. Miller examines Argentina as a place of refuge for Jewish survivors during and after the Holocaust with a particular interest in the transmission and manifestations of Holocaust memory in the families of refugee-survivors and in the public. She follows Argentine Jewish refugees into the postwar decades, specifically looking at the ways in which Holocaust memory and trauma affected their resettlement and lives in Argentina.

Miller’s research questions include: What are the narratives of loss testified by Jewish refugees? How did these losses and attempts to repair them affect the refugees as they settled in Argentina? Did Jewish
refugees take on particular defense mechanisms or activism as a result of Holocaust memory/legacy? What was the situation of Jewish Argentinians during the last dictatorship? Did memory of the Holocaust affect individual Jews and community action during the dictatorship? By examining Jewish refugee-survivors and their descendants, Miller hopes to develop a deeper understanding about how the memory of genocide affects the response to state-sponsored threats and violence. Furthermore, she is interested in the potential use of such historical research to connect with and influence current policymaking for refugee victims of genocide and mass atrocity.

Having developed an interest in pedagogy, Miller gave a series of fall talks at a local Massachusetts high school and presented “Teaching the Holocaust in the 21st Century: Reasons and Relevance” at the Annual Holocaust Educators’ Workshop, held at the University of Hartford. While in New England, she spent several days at the Yale Fortunoff Archive of Holocaust Testimonies in New Haven, CT. In winter, she presented a paper, “Holocaust Memory and Refugee Experience in Argentina,” at the Association for Jewish Studies conference and lectured at West Virginia University on “Diaries and Letters: Exploring the Holocaust through Primary Sources.”

A six-month research trip to Buenos Aires was crucial to advancing her project. Miller visited local memory sites related to the Holocaust, Argentina’s last military dictatorship, and the bombings of the Israeli Embassy and the AMIA (Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina) building. She combed through the archives of the Delegation of Jewish Argentine Associations, the Buenos Aires Jewish Institute of Investigations, and Parque de la Memoria. Most importantly, she worked with the organization Generations of the Shoah to conduct oral history interviews with Holocaust survivors and their families. During a spring trip to Santiago, Chile, she forged connections, visited memory sites, and discussed her research with colleagues working on similar topics. A visit to the Jewish Interactive Museum in Santiago proved particularly fruitful and she hopes to deepen connections with them in the future. Finally, in fall, Miller happily accepted the position of Education Director at the Holocaust Museum & Center for Tolerance and Education in Suffern, New York.

Podbielska has conducted intensive field and archival work in her native Poland. Her first chapter is a case study of a failed rescue attempt. The Germans murdered Wiktoria and Józef Ulma, a peasant couple, together with their children and two Jewish families they sheltered. Critical analysis of commemoration of the Ulmas examines the conceptualization of rescue within the framework of Christian martyrdom and considers the instrumental use of “the Righteous” in the current government historical policy. Her next chapter addresses the de-politicized and gendered representations of rescue through the figure of Irena Sendler. Often portrayed as a caretaker and a surrogate mother, the collaborative character of Sendler’s work – the majority of liaison officers were women, some of them Jewish – is ignored. In the collective imagination, Sendler single-handedly led children out of the ghetto. Her political affiliation with socialism, lifelong commitment to social justice, and close personal relationships with Jews, are sacrificed to the sweet-old-lady-with-a-heart-of-gold image. The case of Sendler, who, as the tagline goes, “saved twice as many people as Schindler,” illustrates the fixation on numbers and competition with other nations in Polish discourse on rescue, apparent in rhetoric surrounding her candidacy for the Nobel Peace Prize.

Alicja Podbielska is an active participant in conferences and workshops around the globe. In spring, she presented, “Genealogical Memory of the Righteous in Poland,” at the University of Michigan Polish-Jewish Studies Workshop Generations and Genealogies. In her paper, she analyzed discourse on Polish help to the Jews as a vital part of the 1968 antisemitic campaign. During her spring visit in the US, Podbielska held the Fred and Maria Devinski Memorial Fellowship at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. She returned to Europe to attend the UK workshop Holocaust Studies after the Spatial Turn where she gave a paper about Jewish hideouts as a new site of Holocaust Studies after the Spatial Turn.
Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman opposed the liberation forces using violent and non-violent tactics. Rahman will demonstrate that the collaborators were not monolithic in character; rather, they competed among themselves for power.

As is well known, Islamist collaborators were influential in East Pakistani politics and prominent members of the Shanti Committee and Razakar Bahnis were leading political figures who proudly participated in the Pakistan movement in the 40s and 50s. During the war and in the preceding period, they fostered anti-Indian and anti-Hindu politics in East Pakistan. They considered the war, led by the Awami League and the radical left, an Indian conspiracy supported by local Hindus. Along with the Pakistani military regime, local collaborators portrayed the war as a jihad against India and local Hindus, legitimizing atrocities in religious terms.

The Jamaat-i-Islam and its student wing were the most active among the collaborator groups. They sought power as the war created a political vacuum in East Pakistan. While most of the nationalist and secular parties of East Pakistan took part in the liberation struggle, a number of Islamist parties formed groups to support the Pakistani military response. In return, the Pakistani government provided them legal and financial protection. Furthermore, the regime favored them by organizing a bi-election in which Jamaat emerged as the strongest party, albeit through an uncontested election.

Rahman will also examine post-war politics and the largely unsuccessful attempts to prosecute collaborators. After the war, thousands faced deadly threats. In one estimate, around eleven thousand collaborators appealed to the new Bangladeshi government, preferring arrest to possibly lethal consequences. The top collaborators escaped and sought refuge in Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, England, and the United States. Some returned after the 1975 killing of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and rebuilt their political careers.

One of the challenges Rahman faces is finding reliable documentary evidence. Newspaper reports, memoirs, testimonies and trial records are the main sources. Rahman will also investigate the national archives regarding the activities of the Malek government, which collaborated with the Pakistani regime. He also plans to conduct interviews in different parts of Bangladesh. But, the collaborators themselves are reluctant to discuss their past. Finally, Rahman is learning Hindi in order to access important Indian sources.
Claims Conference fellow Jason Tingler examines the Holocaust and other forms of ethnic violence in the Chełm region of occupied Poland. In his dissertation *Mosaic of Destruction: The Holocaust and Interethnic Violence in Chełm, 1939-1944*, Tingler analyzes the interaction among different groups in the context of the violence that took place in the district. Tingler views this region as a microcosm of wartime events in Eastern Europe. The region housed the Sobibór death camp and the prisoner of war camp Stalag 319; while the former is well-known for its approximately 200,000 Jewish victims, the latter is often overlooked despite its death toll of more than 100,000, mostly Soviet, prisoners of war. Several Jewish ghettos and labor camps were located in Chełm. In addition, harsh deportations and death marches of local Jewish civilians unfolded in the region. Yet, the Germans were not the only perpetrators in the district. After coexisting for centuries, more-or-less peacefully, Polish and Ukrainian residents committed deadly acts of violence against each other, while also targeting surviving Jews in the region. Polish and Ukrainian partisans instituted their own policies of ethnic cleansing, manipulating the German occupational authorities to further their own ethno-nationalist aims. Tingler’s dissertation explores the impact of the German occupation on these ethnic relations to determine how this region’s historical multiethnic diversity concluded.

Tingler conducted archival research at the USHMM and the US National Archives. He focused on collecting and studying the case files from postwar Polish trials about the crimes committed by the Polish-Catholic population in the Chełm region. Holocaust scholars have only recently begun to explore these records, which are indispensable for understanding the social realities that Polish Jews faced during the Nazi genocide. In one of the cases that Tingler discovered, a Polish farmer invited a group of Jews, whom he had found hiding in the woods, into his home. After pretending to be a warm and generous host for a few days, the Polish farmer began extorting the Jews for money and valuables. After robbing them of their precious-remaining assets, the Pole tried to murder them; he killed one of the Jews, while the others successfully fled. This incident shows the treachery that lurked for Jews in any interactions with local gentiles.

In May, Tingler participated in a symposium, *Religion and Ethno-Nationalism during the Era of the World Wars*, co-sponsored by the University of Toronto and the USHMM. The symposium provided the opportunity to reflect on the role of Christianity in the mass violence that devastated the Chełm region. From his preliminary research, Tingler found that people who took inspiration from Catholic and Orthodox tenets were more likely to aid Jews, while religiously discernible behavior often spurred violence between Catholic Poles and Orthodox Ukrainians. Ironically, then, Christianity appears to have played a limited positive role on Jewish-Christian relations, while it worsened intra-Christian relations.

Tingler is pleased to have received a Saul Kagan Fellowship in Advanced Shoah Studies beginning in fall. The support of this fellowship will enable him to complete his research and finish writing his dissertation.
STAND: The Student-Led Movement to End Mass Atrocities

STAND is an undergraduate club devoted to educating Clark students about the major genocides of the 20th century—the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the genocides in Cambodia and Bosnia, and the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda. STAND also strives to introduce students to current atrocities that show signs of becoming genocidal. The organization launched in the early 2000s as a student branch of the Genocide Intervention Network (GI-Net) to help stop the genocide in Darfur. Co-founder Mark Hanis visited the Strassler Center to give an Especially for Students lecture in 2006, at which he inspired Clark students to establish a campus chapter.

STAND has since expanded to cover mass violence taking place in Burma, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan, and Syria, which has meant a growing focus on refugee issues over the past year. The goal is to educate students about these conflict areas and to encourage them to take action by providing them with tools to make a difference. Whether as simple as signing a petition or as influential as lobbying on Capitol Hill, STAND seeks to engage students in important international affairs in ways that have the potential to influence US Foreign Policy.

Clark STAND began the academic year by focusing on actions that would benefit refugees in Worcester. Partnering with a local organization, the Worcester Refugee Assistance Program (WRAP), STAND held an event asking what students would miss most if forced to flee their homes. In addition to bringing attention to the plight of refugees, we sought to make a tangible difference to the lives of resettled refugees by holding a children’s book drive. We were able to donate over 150 books to children served by WRAP.

During the fall semester, Hannah King ’19 and I attended the STAND Conference in Washington D.C. with students from across the US. We participated in discussions with human rights advocates, joined workshops on student activism, and lobbied Massachusetts representatives and senators for increased refugee funding. STAND ended the fall semester with a movie screening of the film, Denial, which dramatized the story of Emory University Professor Deborah Lipstadt. Sued for libel in a London court by Holocaust denier David Irving, Lipstadt needed to prove in court that the Holocaust had undoubtedly taken place. Prior to the screening, Strassler Center PhD students—Gabrielle Hauth, Simon Goldberg, and Emre Dağlıoğlu led a panel discussion about genocide denial.

The spring semester opened with the inauguration of President Donald Trump followed by a string of Executive Orders. STAND responded to the refugee ban immediately, holding an event entitled “Do What’s Write,” a night of music and food at which students wrote letters to their Congressional Representatives to condemn the travel ban. STAND collected over 70 letters appealing to Congressmen and women representing nine different states. A highlight of the year was the STAND Northeast Regional Conference hosted by our chapter in the Rose Library. Planned and attended entirely by students, the two-day conference brought together 30 participants. Featured speakers came from the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, WRAP, various NGOs, and Strassler Center Visiting Professor Chen Bram. Day one was devoted to education. Representatives of the Nexus Fund, an NGO that seeks to end mass atrocities, taught participants about the persecution carried out against the Rohingya population in Myanmar. In addition, they viewed a virtual reality film showing the conditions in modern-day concentration camps. Day two comprised brainstorming and action as students were able to call their senators, develop fundraising strategies, and learn about how to harness social media for social change. The conference was highly successful and hopefully the first of many. We are grateful for the support of Strassler Center faculty, staff, and PhD students. STAND enjoyed a productive year—growing in numbers and visibility. A busy year of events and the well-attended regional conference connected students across the Clark campus and throughout the northeast, inspired a strong and committed network of genocide prevention activists!

Casey Bush ’19
Research into teaching and learning about the Holocaust (TLH) has rapidly emerged as an international field of study over the last decade. Yet, TLH research in the United States, while popular for longer than in many other countries, can appear less comprehensive by comparison. This is due to the decentralized nature of Holocaust education in the US context. Without a national curriculum, and mandated by only seven states, the content and methods of Holocaust education programs can vary dramatically between districts, schools, and even classrooms. Thus, attempts to represent Holocaust Education accurately confines research in the US to a small area of study. It is with this in mind that I set out to investigate the state of Holocaust education in Worcester Public Schools, specifically at the secondary level.

The idea for this project developed in spring 2016 when I accompanied Strassler Center PhD students to North High School in Worcester, one of the most diverse high schools in Massachusetts. They were engaged in a project to help teach the Holocaust in English classes. During the visit, I was intrigued by the intricacies of Holocaust education and the different ways it is performed in the classroom. During summer 2016, I began to delve into Holocaust Education by assisting at the Strassler Center’s professional development seminar for teachers (funded by the Melvin S. Cutler Charitable Foundation). With the support of an undergraduate summer internship stipend, I also interned at Facing History and Ourselves, a global leader in Holocaust education. These experiences laid the ground for my summer 2017 research project. Having received funding from the LEEP Center at Clark and a Steinbrecher fellowship, I was able to conduct an independent research project on Holocaust education in the Worcester Public Schools with the support of my advisors at the Strassler Center, Professor Thomas Kühne and Dr. Mary Jane Rein.

The project consisted of interviews with thirty students from two Worcester secondary schools. The participants, students in grades 9, 10, and 11, had learned about the Holocaust in either their English or History classes. In my interviews with them I sought to assess what historical knowledge students had gained about the Holocaust and how they reacted to learning about it. Preliminary results from these interviews suggest that students who studied the Holocaust in History classes were able to provide a more accurate historical overview of the events, while students who encountered the Holocaust in English classes seemed to connect with it more deeply and on an emotional level.

The second phase of my project involved interviewing the teachers of these students to develop an understanding of how they taught the Holocaust in their classes. Through these interviews, I sought to establish what students of each class should know about the Holocaust, which I could then compare to what knowledge they actually demonstrated in their interviews and locate discrepancies between the two. In addition, I questioned teachers about their goals: did they merely seek to convey content knowledge or did they hope to develop more engaged citizens who drew moral lessons? In the end, I was able to make recommendations to these teachers about where they could improve their Holocaust units to help students better achieve their learning goals.

Though it takes up just a small part of the curriculum in their classrooms, many students note that the Holocaust stands out as both a fascinating and difficult subject to learn. Thus, it is crucial to ensure that it is being taught in the most pedagogically informed and up to date manner possible. It is my hope that this project helps contribute to that effort, and continues to further the partnership between Clark University and Worcester Schools.
Life after the Center

Upon completing doctoral study at the Strassler Center, graduates of the program are attracted to positions in academia, museums, memorials, and other institutions dedicated to education, scholarship, advocacy, relief work, and peace building. Many of the Center’s talented alumni continue to cross paths long after they graduate and despite having attended the program asynchronously. Working across the country and around the globe, they intersect at conferences, collaborate on panels, find employment together, partner on initiatives, and some are in leadership positions that allow them to invite their alumni colleagues to visit as featured speakers.

As Deputy Director at the Wiener Library in London, Christine Schmidt PhD ’03 gladly collaborates with the USHMM. Her partner on projects related to ITS (International Tracing Service) research, archival access issues, digital humanities and education is Elizabeth Anthony PhD ’16, who serves as the International Tracing Service and Partnerships Program Manager at the Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies (USHMM). In addition, Schmidt hosted fellow graduate of the first PhD cohort, Beth Cohen ’03, to deliver the Weiner Library’s keynote address in January on Holocaust Memorial Day. Cohen’s talk “Starting Over: Reconstituted Jewish Families after the Holocaust” was an ideal response to the theme “How can life go on?” Her current book project, Child Survivors of the Holocaust: The Youngest Remnant and the American Experience (Rutgers University Press, forthcoming 2018) focuses on the experience of child survivors who settled in the United States after the Shoah.

Armenian Studies was new to the Strassler Center as Schmidt was finishing the doctoral program. Yet, younger and older colleagues connect across the years at the Weiner Library and other research institutions. At Schmidt’s invitation, Khatchig Mouradian PhD ’16 gave a well-received lecture at the Library in December, “Not Like a Lamb to the Slaughter: Humanitarian Resistance during the Armenian Genocide.” Ümit Kurt PhD ’16 also visited the Library to carry out research as a European Holocaust Research Infrastructure Fellow before relocating to take a post-doctoral fellowship at the Van Leer Institute in Israel.

Anthony, Natalya Lazar, and Jonathan Edelman ’16 are colleagues at the USHMM where they regularly see friends from the Strassler Center. Reunions have become a regular occurrence as Center students and graduates visit to conduct research (Maayan Armelin, Gabrielle Hauth, Mihai Poliec, Jason Tingler), participate in academic programs (Adara Goldberg PhD ’12, Simon Goldberg, Jeffrey Koerber PhD ’15, Joanna Silwa PhD ’16), come as invited fellows (Alexis Herr PhD ’15 and Stefan Ionescu PhD ’13), bring student groups (Raz Segal PhD ’12) or send their students to do research (Jody Russell Manning). With Debórah Dwork spending academic year 2017-18 as the Shapiro Senior Scholar, the USHMM will truly become a hub for Strassler Center friends, students, and graduates.

Mary Jane Rein

Kim Allar (ABD), Instructor, Tsinghua University, Beijing

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Khatchig Mouradian PhD ’16, Nikit and Eleonora Ordjianian Visiting Professor; Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Department, Columbia University

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Mihai Poliec (ABD), Saul Kagan Fellow in Advanced Shoah Study, Conference on Material Claims Against Germany

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Joanna Sliwa PhD ’16, Historian, Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

Lotta Stone PhD ’10, Historian and Research Associate, Middleton Place Foundation, Charleston, South Carolina
Growth & Development

Pioneering gifts made by the Rose, Strassler, Lasry, Kaloosdian, and Mugar families launched the Strassler Center and propelled its development into a world class program. Over two decades, the generous contributions and abiding interest of many friends and Clark alumni have been essential to advancing the international reputation the Strassler Center enjoys. As we plan for the next phase of growth and development, we look to supporters to help expand the program’s scope and influence. A cornerstone of this growth will be the Colin Flug Wing, which will accommodate our doctoral students and the growing Rose Library collection, now 9,000 volumes strong.

The new wing will be a handsome addition to the complex that comprises the Center; together, Cohen-Lasry House, the Rose Library, the Chaifetz Jakubowitz Garden, the Freedman Courtyard, and the Colin Flug Wing, will constitute a mini campus oriented toward Clark’s main quad. Plans to convert the Siff Exhibition space into an accessible entrance lobby are in development. We are deeply appreciative of Clark University trustee Rebecca Colin ’89 PhD who pledged the lead gift to launch the project. The new wing will contain doctoral student offices, a library annex, and study commons. A magnificent contribution from the Strassler family will fund a book annex with compact shelving adequate for holding more than 10,000 additional volumes. Stephen Corman (in memory of Betsy Corman), Lisa ’82 and Michael ’81 Leffell, Susan Rein along with family and friends (in memory of Herbert Rein), Erica Rhine ’67, and Al Tapper donated named offices that will each seat four students. Rosalie Rose’s gift in memory of Sidney Rose caps many years of outstanding support. Many others responded enthusiastically to the project with contributions in honor of founding director Professor Deborah Dwork.

The Strassler Center community will celebrate the opening of the Colin Flug wing in fall 2018 at the same time that we commemorate the 20th anniversary of doctoral education in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Since 1998, donors have recognized that fellowship support is indispensable to recruiting the most talented doctoral students and they established endowments or current use gifts to cover stipend costs and to fund research expenses. This year, the Friends of the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies, under the effective leadership of its chair Steven Migridichian, responded to an urgent appeal to fund a promising new student. Efforts continue apace to create a second endowed fund, in addition to the Agnes Manoogian Haurath fellowship, dedicated to the Armenian Genocide. Margrit and Nishan Atinizian, new friends of the Armenian Genocide program, were lead donors toward that initiative.

Strassler Center donors also provide much needed programmatic support. The Kaloosdian Mugar Friends generously fund the research activities of Taner Akçam, allowing him to make great strides in his work on the Guergerian archive and other initiatives. Yossie and Dana Hollander, Betty Dyer ’50, and others continue to underwrite the ongoing activities of the Israel Academic Exchange. An Anonymous Family Foundation generously sponsored the spring 2017 conference, Holding Accountability Accountable, which gathered a large and highly international group of scholars and activists. The conference achieved important objectives that are part of the Center’s long-term vision, such as the plan to address a wider range of genocides and to forge dynamic connections between academia, pedagogy, and activism. A recently launched Leadership Council, chaired by Rebecca Colin ’89 PhD and David Voremberg ’72, will work toward realizing these goals by broadening support for the program and helping to secure the necessary resources.

The many donors listed here underwrote the activities of the Strassler Center during the academic year 2016-17. The student and faculty accomplishments described throughout this report are a testament to their generosity. We acknowledge them with sincere thanks.

Mary Jane Rein
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*Deceased*
Donor Profile: Stephen Corman

Stephen Corman can’t resist a good cause. When he believes in the mission of an organization, he commits wholeheartedly with generous financial and emotional support. The faculty, staff, and students at the Strassler Center are fortunate to count him a friend. A long-term cancer survivor, he has been a full time activist and advocate, especially on behalf of prostate cancer detection and treatment. He and his wife Betsy were active in the palliative care movement and they devoted countless volunteer hours assisting caregivers with critically ill patients and easing pain and suffering for those at the end of life. In supporting the Schwartz Compassionate Care Center, he has been an enthusiastic advocate for providing the most supportive care to the sick as well as tending to their concerned families. Over the past few years, he has broadened his interests to include numerous cultural, educational, and community organizations including the Westport Playhouse, his local NPR affiliate, the Ferguson Public Library in Stamford CT, the Camphill Foundation, and the Appalachian Mountain Club. He is a tireless participant in the activities and events of each organization he supports. At the Strassler Center, he is a valued member of our inaugural Leadership Council.

Having attended the prestigious Boston Latin School and earned BS and MS degrees from the Sloan School of Management at MIT, Steve understands the value of education. He is a devoted and charitable alumnus to both alma maters. In addition, he supports the secondary school and university education for five children in Kenya, which brings meaningful opportunities for them to improve their lives. Since the death of his dear wife Betsy, Steve has named several spaces to honor their dedication to worthy causes. He established the Stephen and Betsy Corman AMC Harriman Outdoor Center in Harriman State Park. After the space was dedicated, he declared, “This fitting tribute to Betsy’s memory makes me unbelievably proud and hopefully will be enjoyed by many thousands of hikers and campers over the years and expose many inner city children to outdoor life within an hour of NYC.”

A chance encounter with Clark trustee Rebecca Colin ’89 PhD through mutual philanthropic work led Steve to learn about the work of the Strassler Center. Having pledged the lead gift in support of a new Graduate Study building, the Colin Flug Wing, Rebecca invited Steve to learn more about the important work of the PhD students who will carry out their research in this addition. As Betsy Corman had family ties to Worcester and to Clark, Steve welcomed the opportunity to name one of the graduate study offices in her memory. But, he wanted to do more! Given that IBM had been Betsy and Steve’s long-time professional home, Steve decided to make a second gift in support of technology in the new building.

At a fall ceremony to unveil the Stephen and Betsy Corman Palliative Care Center, Steve wore a t-shirt with a special message: Uncle Steve, the man, the myth, the legend. A gift from his grateful nieces and nephews, the shirt recognizes his tremendous generosity in funding their college educations. His friend Rebecca has this to say about him, “There is no one who has more heart than Steve Corman! He genuinely wants to make the world a better place through his gifts of time, money, and intelligence.” The Colin Flug Graduate Study wing will serve doctoral students who come to us from around the globe. They will know that goodhearted friends, like Steve, who care about history, were motivated to make their difficult and important work easier by providing quality space for a growing library, well-equipped student offices, and the latest technology.

Winston Churchill wisely remarked, “You make a living by what you get, you make a life by what you give.” That would make a nice t-shirt for Steve Corman!

Mary Jane Rein
In Memoriam: Marion Pritchard-van Binsbergen, 1920-2016
(extracted from a 2005 essay)

It is my privilege to sit beside Marion Pritchard every week for one semester. She joined me at the seminar table five years ago to co-teach the first of what developed into a cycle of classes on various aspects of the Holocaust. If I am a historian of the Holocaust, Marion was there: an active, engaged, energetic rescuer.

Marion van Binsbergen (her maiden name) was a social work student at the University of Amsterdam when Germany invaded the Netherlands. What prompted her to undertake clandestine, dangerous activities? Every day, on her way to the university she passed a small children’s home. One day in 1942, she froze at the sight of Germans taking the children out to a truck. “The children didn’t move very fast. They were crying and upset. The Germans just picked them up by an arm, or a leg, or by their hair, and threw them in the truck. Two women came down the street from the other end and tried to stop them, and they threw the women on the truck too.”

It was the last time Marion did nothing. She did not belong to a network. Like most rescuers, she operated on her own but aided others. At the same time, she hid three Jewish children and their father. From Marion, our students learned how the eight words “She hid three Jewish children and their father,” translated into daily life. How did this come about? What were the consequences?

A family friend asked her to hide Freddie Polak and his children aged four, two, and newborn. They moved to the village of Huizen. Danger lurked constantly. One night, three Germans and a Dutch policeman, a Nazi collaborator, raided the house. The family hid in a place prepared under the floorboards, but Marion hadn’t given the baby a sleeping powder. It was usual for Nazis to return if they hadn’t found the people they sought. But as the baby started to cry, Marion took the children out. When the Dutchman returned alone, Marion shot him to protect the children. By the end of the war, Marion noted, she had “killed, stolen, lied, everything. I had broken every one of the Ten Commandments, except maybe the first.”

Marion and I sat for hours recording her oral history. Her experience as “participant historian” shaped mine as “analytic historian.” Jews were at least as active in rescue operations as gentiles, Marion asserted. Some were as vulnerable as those they sought to save. For example, Marion found a hiding place for Karel Poons, a gay Jewish ballet dancer. He dyed his hair and passed as a gentile. And he was involved in rescue activities. In July 1944, Karel and Marion rescued a two-year-old girl held under guard at a physician’s house in another village. The Gestapo hoped that their interrogation of her parents would go better if they knew she was in danger. Karel insisted on helping even though he would have been in serious trouble if their plan failed. He was Jewish. He was gay. He was hiding. Karel chatted to the guard at the front door while Marion went in the back and found the child upstairs. The doctor’s wife tried to stop her, but Marion took the girl and rode away with her on the back of her bike.

The students in our seminar wrestled with the significance of this genre of resistance. As did I. Actions such as these clearly illuminate that, despite the terror of German rule, it was possible to circumvent difficulties and negotiate obstacles. Not everyone stood by silently. Not everyone participated in genocide. Other forms of behavior were practicable and feasible. During the Holocaust, hundreds of thousands of righteous – Jews like Karel Poons; gentiles like Marion Pritchard -- came forward throughout German-Europe. Still: there is no silver lining. One cannot say, “it was the most lethal, most geographically comprehensive genocide in the history of western civilization but the rescuers were heroes.” What one can say is “The Holocaust was the most lethal, most geographically comprehensive genocide in the history of western civilization, and the rescuers were heroes.” At the same time. And thus, Marion’s legacy to all of us is hope.

Deborah Dwork
In memoriam: David Rose (August 12, 1957-July 31, 2017)

David Rose was the youngest of five siblings, affectionately known around the Strassler Center as the mini Roses (though David was a lanky 6’3”). The elder Roses, Shirley, Ralph, Rosalie, and Sidney, established the Rose Professorship in 1996 to honor the memory of their father Philip whose extended family was murdered in Poland during the Holocaust. Having endowed a pioneering professorship in Holocaust History, the Rose brothers and their wives generously funded the construction of the Rose Library and then a doctoral fellowship. These gifts laid the ground for an extraordinary Center that forever changed the academic landscape. Clark’s program in Holocaust History and Genocide Studies was the first of its type. And it continues as one of the most forward and innovative programs of its kind - an exemplary model for institutions across the United States and around the world.

After the deaths of Shirley and Ralph, the younger generation deepened their involvement with the program their parents, aunt, and uncle had launched. Dianne, Linda (who died in February 2016), Billy, Lisa, and David took a keen interest in maintaining and growing the Rose family legacy. In 2006, they committed to supporting a doctoral student and Adara Goldberg PhD ’12 became the inaugural Shirley and Ralph Rose Fellow. Over the five years of the program, the Rose siblings got to know their fellow over lunches and celebrated with her when Adara successfully defended her dissertation. Pleased with the success of the program and the quality of the students, the five younger Roses chose to donate the remainder of their parents’ charitable foundation to establish a permanent fellowship. Throughout the process, David took the lead role on behalf of the family.

Over lunch in 2014, David and Billy were introduced to Khatchig Mouradian PhD ’16, then our Shirley and Ralph Rose Fellow. David wrote with enthusiasm about meeting Khatchig and learning about his life growing up in Beirut, “Thank you for getting us together. It was wonderful catching up on the history of Clark and the evolution of the Strassler Center. I get a wealth of information every time we meet and yesterday was no exception. I had a chance to talk with Khatchig before you arrived. He has experienced a lot in his life and I cannot wait to read his talk. But English only, my Turkish is rusty." Known for his dry quips, David couldn’t resist a little humor but he was deeply impressed to learn that Khatchig had recently delivered a talk about the Armenian Genocide in Ankara. That he gave the talk in Turkish amazed him. And, David concluded with sincerity, “I know there are a lot of great students, past and present, who have gone through the program, and who are special people. Thanks for keeping us informed.”

David and his beautiful wife Melody were dealt a cruel hand. Both suffered from devastating neurological diseases that robbed them of their wonderful lives together and with their devoted children, Alex and Alana. Yet, even while dealing with life altering illnesses, they continued to attend Strassler Center events and to remain in touch for as long as they were able. Their generosity and commitment will remain as shining examples.

Mary Jane Rein
“Cultivate the habit of being grateful for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously,” Ralph Waldo Emerson famously urged. Thus, I use this space to offer thanks to the staff of the Strassler Center whose dedication and professionalism are essential to the accomplishments recorded in these pages. Angela Santamaria, our extraordinary budget coordinator, devoted the past six years to improving the procedures that we use for our budgets and accounting. Her recent departure was eased by her willingness to train her replacement. Kim Vance steps into this position secure in the knowledge that our financial operation is on solid footing thanks to Angela’s accomplishments in this domain. Robyn Conroy, the Center’s long serving part-time librarian, enters into an expanded role. While continuing to oversee the Rose Library with paramount efficiency, she brings her librarian’s fondness for organization and detail to her new position as program manager. Jean Hearns, the Center’s administrative assistant sits in the busy hub of Cohen Lasry House’s main office where she directs a myriad of projects that keep the Center running smoothly. Despite a thousand daily interruptions, she ensures that students, faculty, and visitors have whatever they need. “Diligence is the mother of good fortune,” according to Benjamin Disraeli, and the achievements chronicled in this report are the product of many hours of conscientious effort. But there is good fortune, too, in the opportunity to work with wonderful colleagues.

– Mary Jane Rein

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