

MEMORY AND COMMEMORATION:  
A COMPARISON OF TENNESSEE'S HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS

When we remember the past, we use the present as our starting point. This means for historical memory and its commemoration we begin with “the living” (in Hebrew *ha-cha'im*). In the Jewish tradition, as in most Western religions, those who no longer walk among us are still very much alive.<sup>1</sup> This idea is as much a philosophy of history as it is a religious belief about the past. So the very idea of a memorial calls us not only to the past but also to the present time. The events or the persons remembered may be done or gone, in the sense of linear time, but the events or persons—their importance, their influence, their span of time on earth—should not and cannot be forgotten, because “their spirits” breathe and live among us now, in the present, in existential time.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>See Yanki Tauber, “Life After Death,” Parshah: Chayei Sarah, Genesis 23.1–25.18, Chabad.org, 6 September 2015, online at: [www.chabad.org/parshah/article\\_cdo/aid/2627/jewish/Life-After-Death.htm](http://www.chabad.org/parshah/article_cdo/aid/2627/jewish/Life-After-Death.htm) (accessed 6 September 2015); Howard Coward, ed., *Life after Death in World Religions*, Faith Meets Faith: An Orbis Series in Interreligious Dialogue, gen. ed., Paul F. Knitter (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005); and Mario Erasmo, “Location and Commemoration” and “Cult of the Dead” in *Death: Antiquity and Its Legacy*, Ancients and Moderns Series, gen. ed., Phiroze Vasunia (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2012), 61-139.

<sup>2</sup>See David Lowenthal, “Creative Anachronism,” *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 363ff. Carl G. Gustavson highlights in his “Personal Contacts with the Past,” *A Preface to History* (New York, NY: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1955), 22-23, that “the contours we accept as a part of our *modern* world are in reality the outcroppings of layers laid down in the past. As we read history, we are not merely scanning remote occurrences, but rather are studying the contours of our own environment as they were originally created. In our three-dimensional surroundings there is actually a fourth dimension, Time, whose evidences are not readily visible to the unpracticed eye, whose influences may be unconscious, yet which persistently permeate our lives.” On historical knowledge as existential knowledge, see Rudolf Bultmann, “The Nature of History,” *History and Eschatology: The Presence of Eternity* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1957), 119-122.

To remember and to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, Jewish<sup>3</sup> and other Tennesseans have established three memorials in the state—the Holocaust Memorial Gallery at the Belz Museum of Asian and Judaic Art in downtown Memphis, the Nashville Holocaust Memorial near Percy Warner Park in Nashville, and the Children’s Holocaust Memorial and Paper Clip Project at the Whitwell Middle School in rural Marion County.<sup>4</sup> This paper will take a look at each memorial, its geographical location and situation, the arrangement or format for

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<sup>3</sup>According to the *U.S. Census Bureau, Statistical Abstract of the United States: 2012*, approximately 6.5 million persons in the United States, or about two percent of the total population, claim to be Jewish. Of this number, 19,550 or about twenty thousand live in the state of Tennessee with about twenty synagogues, or Jewish communities of faith, active across the state. See “Table 77. Christian Church Adherents, 2000, and Jewish Population, 2010–States,” available online at: [www.census.gov/2010census/](http://www.census.gov/2010census/) (accessed 19 April 2015). The census bases its data about Jewish population “on scientific studies and informant estimates provided by local Jewish communities” and does not differentiate cultural, ethnic, or religious definitions of Jewish identity.

For data on Jewish population in Tennessee, see Elizabeth Tighe, et al., “Appendix D: Population Estimates, Jewish Adults by Religion by County Cluster, 2012,” *Steinhardt Social Research Institute, American Jewish Population Estimates: 2012* (Waltham, MA: Brandeis University, 2013), 75-78, online at: [www.brandeis.edu/ssri/pdfs/AmJewishPopAddD.pdf](http://www.brandeis.edu/ssri/pdfs/AmJewishPopAddD.pdf) (accessed 6 September 2015); Ira M. Sheskin and Arnold Dashefsky, eds., *Jewish Population in the United States, 2012* (Storrs, CT: University of Connecticut, 2012), 18-19, 23-24, online at: [www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=2917](http://www.jewishdatabank.org/studies/downloadFile.cfm?FileID=2917) (accessed 6 September 2015).

<sup>4</sup>“Belz Museum of Asian and Judaic Art” (Memphis, TN: Belz Museum, n.d.), online at: [www.belzmuseum.org/](http://www.belzmuseum.org/) (accessed 19 April 2015); “The Nashville Holocaust Memorial” (Nashville, TN: The Jewish Federation, n.d.), online at: [www.nashvilleholocaustmemorial.org/index.html](http://www.nashvilleholocaustmemorial.org/index.html) (accessed 19 April 2015); Children’s Holocaust Memorial and Paper Clip Project, “Marion County School District: Whitwell Middle School” (Whitwell, TN: Whitwell Middle School, 2015), online at: [www.whitwellmiddleschool.org](http://www.whitwellmiddleschool.org) (accessed 19 April 2015).

presenting Holocaust history, and the Holocaust history represented.<sup>5</sup> A brief history of each memorial as well as accessibility to the public also will be mentioned.

The Belz Museum of Asian and Judaic Art on South Main Street in historic downtown Memphis, originally Peabody Place Museum, began in the late 1990s. The museum has a comprehensive collection of Chinese art, primarily from the Qing dynasty (1644-1911), and a large collection of Jewish art, featuring contemporary works by Ofra Friedland and Daniel Kafri from Israel and notable Jewish artists from Europe—Samuel Bak, Marc Chagall, and Emmanuel Mane-Katz.<sup>6</sup> Belz Museum highlights the personal collection of Jack and Marilyn Belz, two

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<sup>5</sup>For the role of and issues concerning memory, its representation, and the Holocaust, see: Michael Bernard-Donals, *Forgetful Memory: Representation and Remembrance in the Wake of the Holocaust* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2009); Sidney M. Bolkosky, *Searching for Meaning in the Holocaust*, Contributions to the Study of Religion, Number 69, Christianity and the Holocaust—Core Issues, Series Editors, Carol Rittner and John K. Roth (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002); Omer Bartov, *Mirrors of Destruction: War, Genocide, and Modern Identity* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2000); Geoffrey Hartman, ed., *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1994); Robert N. Kraft, *Memory Perceived: Recalling the Holocaust*, Psychological Dimensions to War and Peace, Series Editor, Harvey Langholtz (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2002); Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age*, translated by Assenka Oksiloff, Politics, History, and Social Change, edited by John C. Torpey (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2006); and Barbie Zelizer, *Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory through the Camera's Eye* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

<sup>6</sup>See Samuel Bak, “Speaking About the Unspeakable,” Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota, 2009), online at: [www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/responses/bak/](http://www.chgs.umn.edu/museum/responses/bak/) (accessed 22 September 2015); Samuel Bak, “Beholding After: Samuel Bak’s Art of Hope,” Pucker Gallery (Boston, MA: Pucker Gallery, n.d.), online at: [www.puckergallery.com/artists/bak\\_index/bak\\_exhibit.html](http://www.puckergallery.com/artists/bak_index/bak_exhibit.html) (accessed 22 September 2015); Marc Chagall, Collection Online, Guggenheim (New York, NY: Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, 2015), online at: [www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artists/bios/1172](http://www.guggenheim.org/new-york/collections/collection-online/artists/bios/1172) (accessed 22 September 2015); Ivan Kenneally, “Chagall: Love, War and Exile,” Open Letters Monthly, an Arts and Literature Review (Jamaica Plain, MA: Open Letters LLC, n.d.), online at: [www.openlettersmonthly.com/marc-chagall-between-paris/](http://www.openlettersmonthly.com/marc-chagall-between-paris/) (accessed 22 September 2015); “Emmanuel Mane-Katz,” RO (Long Island City, NY: Rogallery.com, 2015), online at: [www.rogallery.com/Mane-Katz/Katz-M-bio.htm](http://www.rogallery.com/Mane-Katz/Katz-M-bio.htm) (accessed 22 September 2015).

long-time Memphis residents, who became interested in collecting Asian art after visiting an Oriental art gallery in Los Angeles in 1968. Very recently, this year on April 6, the museum's curators, with assistance from the Tennessee Holocaust Commission,<sup>7</sup> unveiled its new addition—the Holocaust Memorial Gallery that looks at “the struggles and triumphs of the survivors, refugees, and liberators of the Holocaust of World War II.” According to Belinda Fish, the director of the museum, the goal of the new gallery is to remember the Holocaust through “the personal experiences of the individuals who ultimately define the Holocaust . . . to share their first-hand knowledge with the rest of the world . . . to connect generations in order that each successive generation may bear witness.” She points out the didactic and hopeful role of the exhibit by suggesting, “While individual experiences may seem insignificant to the greater world, these shared struggles make us realize that what haunts one haunts us all. Remembering the ghosts of the past gives the world hope.”<sup>8</sup>

You enter the Belz Museum in Pembroke Square at Peabody Place from South Main Street, and you make your way along Pembroke's illuminated entryway to the stairway down to the museum on the lower level. Once there, you will pass through a short corridor to the fine collection of Jewish art, and to the left you will see a sign for the Holocaust Memorial Gallery. The small but informative gallery features residents of Memphis who were victims of the Holocaust. The black and white portraits, nicely framed with personal documentation, were

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<sup>7</sup>See “Tennessee Holocaust Commission” (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Holocaust Commission, 2009), online at: [www.tennesseeholocaustcommission.org/](http://www.tennesseeholocaustcommission.org/) (accessed 17 September 2015).

<sup>8</sup>“Belz Museum of Asian and Judaic Art.”

photographed by Robert Heller<sup>9</sup> and are part of the Tennessee Holocaust Commission's "Living On" project.<sup>10</sup> In a real sense in these portraits, gallery visitors come face-to-face with living testimony to personal experiences of Holocaust. Each Memphis survivor has a story to tell. Each survivor lived through difficult days, found ways to cope, and now can give voice to the tragedy of human suffering.<sup>11</sup> Also in the gallery, between portraits of survivors and a Holocaust map with World War II timeline, is a section dedicated to those who perished and to those who liberated prisoners still alive in the concentration camps at the end of the war. The photographs here, many on loan from other collections, highlight the gruesome carnage by the Nazis that was discovered by Allied soldiers who took control of the camps.<sup>12</sup> The testimony, therefore, to Holocaust from living and dead and from victims and rescuers are to be found on the gallery's walls.

Another noticeable and important part of the Holocaust Memorial Gallery are the bronze sculptures by Nicky Imber—"Woman Begging for Mercy For Her Baby," "Love of Torah," and

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<sup>9</sup>Dr. Heller is Associate Professor in the School of Journalism and Electronic Media at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville.

<sup>10</sup>See *Living On*, Tennessee Holocaust Commission (Nashville, TN: Tennessee Holocaust Commission, 2009), online at: [www.tennesseeholocaustcommission.org/living\\_on.php?id=8](http://www.tennesseeholocaustcommission.org/living_on.php?id=8) (accessed 4 October 2015). See too Gwynn Thayer, ed., *"Living On" Tennessee Holocaust Commission Interviews* (Nashville, TN: Tennessee State Library and Archives, 2003), online at: [www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/2008-047.pdf](http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/2008-047.pdf) (accessed 4 October 2015).

<sup>11</sup>For a creative use of philosophy, prose, and poetry to assert that witness to *Shoah* is a pressing responsibility, see James Hatley, *Suffering Witness: The Quandary of Responsibility after the Irreparable* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2000).

<sup>12</sup>See Robert Abzug, *Inside the Vicious Heart: Americans and the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps* (reprint edition; Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1987); Yehuda Bauer, "Rescue," *A History of the Holocaust* (Danbury, CT: Franklin Watts, 1982), 279-302; Laurence Rees, "Liberation and Retribution," *Auschwitz: A New History* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2005), 259ff.

“Man Entangled in Barbed Wire.” These reproductions are derived from Imber’s own experience as a prisoner at Dachau and his work displayed at the Holocaust Memorial Park in Karmiel which is located in the Beit Kerem Valley of the Lower Galilee in northern Israel. The park’s theme—“From Holocaust to Resurrection”—features bronze statues illustrating the Holocaust, the Wandering, and the Hope of the Jewish people. For Imber, a diaspora Jew born and raised in Vienna, Austria, the inspiration for his “Love of Torah” came from “deep and painful memories, memories of which will haunt my heart and mind forever.”<sup>13</sup> As you ponder the gallery’s exhibits, you will be touched by the woman begging, the man struggling, and the immigrant cradling the Torah. You will feel their emotion, you will think about their pain, you will begin to understand, in a vivid way, Holocaust.

To stress the importance of Holocaust experience and study for all generations and for all time, one section of the gallery holds a variety of artifacts and memorabilia that includes the work of notables Elie Wiesel and Simon Wiesenthal, photos of more recent Jewish celebrations and visits to Holocaust sites, and acknowledgments concerning the gallery from Memphis city leaders. To be noted as well are inclusions of: (1) ghetto money from Buchenwald, Germany, Litzmanstadt (formerly Lodz), Poland, and Teresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, along with an excellent explanation; (2) a hand-written account, with printed transcription, about the murder of Jews during Winter 1942 in the synagogue of Yedintsy, Moldavian Republic of the former U.S.S.R., by Aron M. Rappaport of Toronto, Canada; (3) the survivor’s *haggadah* painting from the Gurs internment camp in the Basque region of southwestern France; and (4) the hand-painted

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<sup>13</sup>Nicky Imber, “Love of Torah” Display, Holocaust Memorial Gallery, Belz Museum of Asian and Judaic Art (Memphis, TN: Belz Museum, 2015). For a brief sketch of Imber’s life and work, see Nicky Imber (2004), online at: [www.nicky-imber.com/biography.html](http://www.nicky-imber.com/biography.html) (accessed 4 October 2015).

parchment of the city of Jerusalem, the Jewish people's guardians of tradition. This variety of Holocaust remembrances in the gallery will impress you with the beauties and complexities of the Jewish faith and the ongoing struggle by survivors and others to give voice to injustice and intolerance in our imperfect world.<sup>14</sup>

The Holocaust Memorial Gallery is a welcome addition to Belz Museum of Asian and Judaic Art. As an indoor museum in downtown Memphis, availability is limited to operating hours—Tuesday thru Friday, 10:00 AM to 5:30 PM, Saturday and Sunday, 12:00 noon to 5:00 PM. But the museum is located in an attractive area, Peabody Place, in an inviting building, Pembroke Square. The ambiance of South Main Street is enhanced by the nice landscaping and the charming old-time flavor of brick pavement, the trolley line, and small shops and eateries. You can visit this area of downtown Memphis to relax, to shop, or just to enjoy the area. But, best of all, at the Belz Museum you can think about the past and learn about those in Memphis who are “Living On” in spite of their experience of the Holocaust.

The Nashville Holocaust Memorial, near Percy Warner Park in southwest Davidson County, was dedicated in October 2006<sup>15</sup> on land provided by the nearby Gordon Jewish Community Center. Esther Loeb, a Holocaust survivor, and Felicia Anchor, a child of Holocaust survivors, led the project by bringing together a committee to design, fund, and construct “a

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<sup>14</sup>On Holocaust survivors, see Dorota Glowacka, *Disappearing Traces: Holocaust Testimonials, Ethics, and Aesthetics* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2012); Nancy R. Goodman and Marilyn B. Meyers, eds., *The Power of Witnessing: Reflections, Reverberations and Traces of the Holocaust, Trauma, Psychoanalysis and the Living Mind* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2012); Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting Life and History* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998); and Kenneth Jacobson, *Embattled Selves: An Investigation into the Nature of Identity through Oral Histories of Holocaust Survivors* (New York, NY: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1994).

<sup>15</sup>The Hebrew date is 5766.

living memorial, a place where remembering and showing respect for the past intermingles with developing an understanding and commitment towards creating a humane future . . . [and] to work towards creating a world where all of us will live free of intolerance, hatred, prejudice, and indifference.”<sup>16</sup> Two goals were projected for the creation of a memorial. First, the aging Holocaust survivor population of the Metro Nashville area needed a place to remember what family members endured and suffered, a place “to recognize and mourn their loved ones.” This goal also included “educational opportunities for visitors . . . the history of the Holocaust through the personal stories of the Nashvillians who are represented there.” Second, the committee wanted to construct a Living Memorial for the citizens of Middle Tennessee in order to highlight for Jews and non-Jews the lessons and the important issues raised by the Holocaust. Since few could travel to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.,<sup>17</sup> the committee felt it was important “to have local contact and impact” and “to sustain a significant physical reminder while creating an environment for learning and reflection.”<sup>18</sup>

As you enter the parking area for the memorial off Percy Warner Boulevard, you are greeted with “SHALOM” etched below the woods on a slight hill. Just beyond is the beginning of the pathway at the circular dedicatory marker—*zachor*, “remember”—and clearly marked with the granite stone sign—Nashville Holocaust Memorial. The concrete pathway is landscaped

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<sup>16</sup>“The Nashville Holocaust Memorial.”

<sup>17</sup>United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (Washington, D.C.: USHMM, n.d.), online at: [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org) (accessed 8 October 2015). See too Michael Berenbaum, *The World Must Know: The History of the Holocaust as Told in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown and Company, 1993); Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s Holocaust Museum* (New York, NY: Viking Penguin, 1995); Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, “Understanding the Holocaust through the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum,” *Journal of Architectural Education* (1984-), Vol. 48, No. 4 (May 1995): 240-249.

<sup>18</sup>“The Nashville Holocaust Memorial.”

nicely and curves slightly through the woods to the memorial proper. Not far away, up the hill and somewhat concealed from view by the trees, are the Twelve Memorial Walls. But first you must pass a solemn reminder of the geographical scope of the horror inflicted on Nashville's Holocaust survivors and refugees by the Nazis. And you are confronted with the meaning of such a horrible past through quotations from Santayana and Burke. Everything here is engraved in stone, or metal, as a permanent, indelible, and unforgettable testimony about this past. Memorial markers greet you as well, and, if you wish, audio commentary and interpretation is provided along the trail.

The Memorial Plaza itself consists of Twelve Memorial Walls, an elevated Sculpture with book, lamp, and bowl, the Eighteen Seats of Honor or "Seats of Life," three pillared tables that give recognition to supporters, and, at the center encircled inside a pentagon, the words of Elie Wiesel, "Sometimes we must interfere. When human lives are endangered, when human dignity is in jeopardy, national borders and sensitivities become irrelevant. Wherever men or women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must—at that moment—become the center of the universe."<sup>19</sup> The circular design of the memorial hearkens the visitor to give heed to the rhythms or cycles of life and time, because "we remember and learn from the past, [but] our present actions will determine the future we create."<sup>20</sup> As you reach the crest of the hill, the memorial's quiet but vivid symbols beckon you to pause and reflect on the

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<sup>19</sup>From Elie Wiesel's acceptance speech in Oslo, Norway for the Nobel Peace Prize, December 10, 1986. For complete text, see "The Nobel Peace Prize 1986, Elie Wiesel: Acceptance Speech," The Official Web Site of the Nobel Prize (1986; Stockholm, Sweden: Nobel Media AB, 2015), online at: [www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance\\_en.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1986/wiesel-acceptance_en.html) (accessed 12 September 2015).

<sup>20</sup>*Guide to the Nashville Holocaust Memorial: Honoring Memory, Challenging the Future* (Nashville, TN: The Jewish Federation, n.d.).

past. The memorial is not overbearing in size or presentation, as it is surrounded, almost completely, by tall trees, shrubs, and bushes. You get the sense of being in a special, even personal, garden. And the stones, the sculpture, and the chairs—symbols that are full of meaning—compel you to stop and take note.

You may wish to touch one of the Twelve Memorial Walls that are inscribed with the names of Holocaust victims and spiritually bond with a friend or family member. Or you may choose to leave a small stone, or folded prayer, on the ledge below to commemorate your visit. You no doubt will notice the book with pages torn and ripped out, and you will remember that the Holocaust destroyed two-thirds of the Jews across Europe.<sup>21</sup> But you will understand by seeing *Ner Tamid*, the eternal flame, that in spite of the cruelty and the suffering there is a sharing of their pain, represented by the bowl of bitter suffering, and there is hope. That hope of life, fortune, and goodwill comes from Nashville's Holocaust survivors who occupy<sup>22</sup> the Eighteen Seats of Life. These eyewitnesses to the horrors of the Holocaust burn brightly like *Ner Tamid* as they watch over these hallowed grounds, pay tribute to their departed ones, and encourage us to promise with them: Never Again!<sup>23</sup> As you ponder all this, you will agree with

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<sup>21</sup>See Saul Friedlaender, *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007); also Bauer, "The 'Final Solution,'" *A History of the Holocaust*, 193-226; Doris L. Bergen, *War and Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2003), 161ff.; Peter Longerich, *Holocaust: The Nazi Persecution and Murder of the Jews* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2010), 179ff.; Gerhard L. Weinberg, "The 'Final Solution' and the War in 1943," *Germany, Hitler, and World War II* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 217-244.

<sup>22</sup>In spirit and literally when they visit the Holocaust Memorial.

<sup>23</sup>The sign put up by liberated prisoners of the concentration camp at Buchenwald, Germany, at the end of World War II. On the challenges of Holocaust, its representation, and history, see Hans Kellner, "'Never Again' Is Now," *History and Theory*, Vol. 33, No. 2 (May 1994): 127-144.

Elie Wiesel that unjust persecution that strips away human dignity must be resisted. And you will be thankful for the many supporters who have given generously to create and maintain this important memorial.

You can return again and again to the outdoor Nashville Holocaust Memorial. It is easy to find, simple to access, and it is always open. The memorial provides for visitors an effective lesson about the Holocaust from survivors and descendants of survivors all of whom have been or are residents of Nashville. The memorial also allows each visitor to experience the past by honoring the memory of significant others who have familial ties to the local community and thereby had an important part to play in the ongoing life and development of Nashville (and the state), its people, and its achievements.<sup>24</sup>

Located in rural Marion County, the Children's Holocaust Memorial brings together the goals of education and commemoration in more than symbols and more than any reenactment. The memorial refocuses experiences and meanings of Holocaust well beyond those touched closely by the atrocities, i.e., survivors and Jews, to include young people in a small secondary school, the community of Whitwell itself, and all who have been influenced by the memorial's presentation. This is accomplished by public display of an authentic artifact utilized by the Nazis to murder Jews—a *Konzentrationslager* (KZL) rail car that was abandoned in Sobibor, Poland in 1945. On this rail car, and many others like it, humans were huddled together, treated less than

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<sup>24</sup>For eyewitness accounts from Nashville's Holocaust survivors, see "Eyewitness Accounts: The Nashville Holocaust Memorial," online at: [www.nashvilleholocaustmemorial.org/page9.html](http://www.nashvilleholocaustmemorial.org/page9.html) (accessed 10 October 2015).

humane, and shuttled to their final destination.<sup>25</sup> Their extreme range of emotions can be felt afresh by anyone who steps aboard, remembers their suffering, and ponders that horrid experience. But it is different. You will not be forced to get on the rail car. And you will leave . . . willingly . . . to go your own way. But you will be changed by the experience of contacting the place of that suffering, the gravity of its meaninglessness, the power of its obnoxiousness. By visiting this rail car, you will have crossed paths with many unnamed and unknown victims who journeyed through and to hell.<sup>26</sup>

The experience of numerous Holocaust victims is, in a sense, transferred by your own experience of the rail car, by seeing and touching the very rail car they were seeing and were touching as they rode to their final destination. This solemn remembrance of the past is not the same as reenactment. It is a new experience in the present time. It is the past linked somehow, mysteriously and existentially, with the now. And such linking of past to present, of countries and cultures across the ocean, and of generations separated by half a century with the creative display of a “cattle car” and with “paper clips” is appropriate.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Yehuda Bauer, “The Death-Marches, January-May, 1945,” *Modern Judaism*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (February 1983): 1-21; Mirko Tuma, “Memories of Teresienstadt,” *Performing Arts Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 2 (Autumn 1976): 12-18; also Alfred C. Mierzejewski, “The Reichsbahn in War and Holocaust, 1939-1945,” *The Most Valuable Asset of the Reich: A History of the German National Railway, Volume 2, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 77ff.

<sup>26</sup>Compare Anton Gill, *The Journey Back from Hell, An Oral History: Conversations with Concentration Camp Survivors* (New York, NY: Morrow, 1988).

<sup>27</sup>For the demands as well as the benefits of Holocaust remembrance, see Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *Thinking the Unthinkable: Meanings of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Paulist Press, 1990); Daniel H. Magilow and Lisa Silverman, *Holocaust Representations in History: An Introduction*, Perspectives on the Holocaust (New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

The story of the memorial is told admirably in *Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children's Holocaust Memorial* by Peter W. Schroeder and Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand.<sup>28</sup>

The project had its beginnings in 1998 as a voluntary, after-school endeavor to learn about the unspeakable—the Holocaust—and to educate about diversity and tolerance. Paper clips, following the model of Norwegian resistance and protest against Nazi aggression,<sup>29</sup> were chosen as the item to collect by students and others involved in the project . . . five million paper clips (amended to eleven million paper clips later)! Submissions came slowly the first year, but after publicity of the project by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., contact was made with two correspondents for German newspapers at the White House, Dagmar and Peter Schroeder.

The Schroeders, urged by their good friend Lena Gitter, wrote articles about the project for German newspapers and soon published *Das Beuroklammer-Projekt (The Paper Clip Project, Fall 2000)* requesting German citizens to send letters and paper clips to Whitwell Middle School. This in turn influenced Dita Smith, *Washington Post* editor, to publish “A Measure of Hope” (April 7, 2001)<sup>30</sup> to encourage involvement in the project by citizens in the United States. After this widespread media exposure, letters, paper clips, and other artifacts began flooding the local post office and Whitwell Middle School. This prompted school staff and the Schroeders to

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<sup>28</sup>Minneapolis, MN: Ken-Bar Publishing, 2004.

<sup>29</sup>See “Unwelcome Change,” *Nonviolence in World War Two: What Happened in Norway* (London, UK: Peace Pledge Union, n.d.), online at: [www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/nvww2/ww2\\_nonviolence\\_norway1.html](http://www.ppu.org.uk/learn/infodocs/nvww2/ww2_nonviolence_norway1.html) (accessed 10 October 2015); also Joe Moran, “Paper Clip, USA,” *Iconic Designs: 50 Stories about 50 Things*, edited by Grace Lees-Maffei (London, UK: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 111ff.

<sup>30</sup>Available online at: [www.washingtonpost.com/pb/archive/lifestyle/2001/04/07/a-measure-of-hope/0428485a-d25c-42f7-8690-2a9d7e70ebe0/?resType=accessibility](http://www.washingtonpost.com/pb/archive/lifestyle/2001/04/07/a-measure-of-hope/0428485a-d25c-42f7-8690-2a9d7e70ebe0/?resType=accessibility) (accessed 6 September 2015).

accelerate their search for a suitable monument to house the paper clips and other memorabilia.

The decision for a proper monument was settled when Sandra Roberts, Seventh Grade Language Arts Teacher at Whitwell, recalled to the Schroeders the feelings her students had experienced during a visit to Washington's Holocaust Museum "as they walked through a cattle car the Nazis had used to transport prisoners to concentration camps."<sup>31</sup>

The search for, purchase and transport of, and site preparation for rail car number 011-993, found at the Railroad Club Ganzlin/Roebel, north of Berlin, Germany, and brought to Whitwell, Tennessee, is itself an incredible story.<sup>32</sup> But why Whitwell? Whitwell is a small town in a rural county. There never has been a synagogue or enough Jews for a *minyan* in Whitwell or Marion County. It is an unlikely locale, an obscure location for a Holocaust memorial.<sup>33</sup> But that is the point precisely. Linda Hooper and David Smith, the school's principals, and a few parents recognized the need in their small town for education about diversity and tolerance.<sup>34</sup> And what better way to emphasize these important life lessons than by

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<sup>31</sup>Schroeder and Schroeder-Hildebrand, *Six Million Paper Clips*, 26.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 27ff.

<sup>33</sup>Total population for Marion County is only 28,237 with 93.8% declaring to be "White" according to Race. Of Tennessee's 95 counties, it ranks 52<sup>nd</sup> by total population and 58<sup>th</sup> by population density. Total population for Whitwell city is only 1,699. "2010 Census Interactive Population Search: TN-Marion County," online at: [www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=47](http://www.census.gov/2010census/popmap/ipmtext.php?fl=47) (accessed 7 September 2015). *Tennessee: 2010, Population and Housing Unit Counts, 2010 Census of Population and Housing* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2012), 60.

For adherents to religious traditions, Marion County has 7,840 Evangelical Protestants (28%), 1,803 Mainline Protestants (6%), 30 Black Protestants (less than 1%), 0 Orthodox (0%), 200 Roman Catholics (less than 1%), and 229 Other (less than 1%), but 18,135 Unclaimed (64%). "Marion County, Tennessee: Religious Traditions, 2010," The ARDA: The Association of Religion Data Archives (University Park, PA: ARDA, n.d.), online at: [www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/47/rcms2010\\_47115\\_county\\_name\\_2010.asp](http://www.thearda.com/rcms2010/r/c/47/rcms2010_47115_county_name_2010.asp) (accessed 7 September 2015).

<sup>34</sup>Schroeder and Schroeder-Hildebrand, *Six Million Paper Clips*, 8ff.

teaching children and youth about the harsh reality and consequences of hate and intolerance—about “disturbing and horrific things.”<sup>35</sup> This is, I believe, the best part of the Holocaust memorial at Whitwell Middle School. It is foremost a children’s memorial for moral education—a tribute about children, by children, and for children.<sup>36</sup>

In the rail car and the monument next to it, the memorial houses eleven million paper clips, representing victims of the Holocaust, various artifacts from the war, letters and documents, and copper butterflies, symbols of new life, to honor the children of Terezin.<sup>37</sup> The formal dedication, attended by over 2,000, was held on November 9, 2001—the 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass. The memorial, located behind Whitwell Middle School, is accessible but not ostentatious (i.e., hidden from the view of those traveling State

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 9.

<sup>36</sup>This was the point stressed by Dagmar Schroeder to Dr. Rainer Zache, the director of the Eisenbahnverein in Ganzlin/Roebel, that swayed him to sell the rail car to the Schroeders for the Whitwell project. She told him, “One and a half million children were killed during the Holocaust, children like your daughter, Herr Direktor. Many of them were transported to their deaths in cattle cars like this one. One and a half million of the paper clips in Whitwell are the symbols of their lives. The Holocaust memorial will be a constant reminder that we all have to strive to make sure that this history is not repeated.” Ibid., 32.

For a good overview of the experience of children as a result of the Holocaust, see Deborah Dwork, *Children With A Star: Jewish Youth in Nazi Europe* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); see as well Howard Greenfield, *The Hidden Children* (New York, NY: Ticknor & Fields, 1993); Jane Marks, *The Hidden Children: The Secret Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1993); William L. Shulman, *Where Have All the Children Gone? Jewish Refugee Children During the Holocaust* (Bayside, NY: Queensborough Community College, 2003); Dina Wardi, *Memorial Candles: Children of the Holocaust*, translated by Naomi Goldblum (London, UK: Tavistock/Routledge, 1992).

<sup>37</sup>See Hana Volavkova, ed., *I Never Saw Another Butterfly: Children’s Drawings and Poems from the Terezin Concentration Camp, 1942-1944*, forward by Chaim Potok, afterward by Vaclav Havel (Second Edition; New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1994); Ruth Thomson, *Terezin: Voices from the Holocaust* (Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press, 2013); Nicholas Stargardt, “Children’s Art of the Holocaust,” *Past & Present*, No. 161 (November 1998): 191-235; Michael Gruenbaum and Todd Hasak-Lowy, *Somewhere There Is Still a Sun: A Memoir of the Holocaust* (New York, NY: Aladdin, 2015).

Highway 28) and is secured by an iron fence gate that stays open during regular school hours but is accessible other times as well. A wooden ramp with safety railings and platform gives all visitors ease of access to the memorial especially the handicapped in wheelchairs or parents with small children in strollers. Placards, not numerous so as not to distract from the monument itself, highlight the origin of the monument, its contributors, the lessons to be learned, and the moral imperative to advance love and tolerance instead of hate and intolerance.<sup>38</sup> An audio narration about the memorial also is available to visitors inside the rail car. Or visitors can choose to look, to feel, to think, to experience in silence.

To summarize, all three memorials are fairly recent additions in Tennessee, as each one is less than twenty years old. They focus on victims of the Holocaust and, for Memphis and Nashville, the survivors. Memphis and Whitwell present important historical artifacts, the material culture of the Holocaust, and all three memorials highlight symbols of Jewish faith. The locales for each are quite different—Memphis a traditional museum, Nashville an outdoor memorial, and Whitwell a middle school. But the memorials demonstrate forcefully the didactic nature of Holocaust remembrance—a clear moral imperative for tolerance and decency in the world today. And, as an appropriate part of any remembrance, the memorials serve to benefit and uplift each of the local communities where they are located.

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<sup>38</sup>For an excellent statement about the need for historians to make “moral judgments,” see John Lewis Gaddis, “Molecules with Minds of Their Own,” *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2002), 111ff. On morality and the Holocaust, see Jonathan Glover, “The Will to Create Mankind Anew: The Nazi Experiment,” *Humanity: A Moral History of the Twentieth Century* (Second Edition; New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012), 315ff. For a good compilation of documents, see Helmut Walser Smith, ed., *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: History, Representation, Ethics* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2002).

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