INTRODUCTION

REMEMBERING, RECTIFYING AND REIMAGINING: CANADIAN PERSPECTIVES ON HOLOCAUST MEMORY IN A CHANGING WORLD

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As we approach the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, Holocaust remembrance faces a critical juncture. The passing of survivors, coupled with the rise of new generations distanced from the lived experiences of the Holocaust, has made preserving its memory both urgent and complex. The articles in this collection provide Canadian perspectives on the challenges of maintaining Holocaust memory and ensuring that its lessons resonate in today's society. Each of the contributors brings a unique perspective to the table, drawing on years of experience in diverse fields of endeavour, thus enriching the interdisciplinary focus of the publication. The reflections gathered here are built on expertise in such diverse fields as Holocaust remembrance, refugee rights, interethnic violence, genocide prevention, philanthropic leadership, historical education, and community engagement. Contributors draw from backgrounds in political science, law, history, public service, and nonprofit leadership, combining scholarly research, practical advocacy, and pedagogical experience to address the complex challenges of preserving Holocaust memory and combatting misinformation. Many authors are also personally connected to the Holocaust or driven by a deep moral responsibility to fight hatred and injustice. These articles collectively offer a powerful reflection on the importance of remembering the Holocaust and acting to convey its universal lessons for the future.

This special issue is divided into three sections. The first, **Honouring Legacies**, includes the testimonies of three authors whose personal connections to the Holocaust have shaped their lives and vocations. The second section **Educating for Empathy**, addresses the evolving challenges and strategies in Holocaust education, focusing on how to engage students in meaningful learning. In the final section, **Confronting Misinformation**, experts discuss

the ongoing threats of Holocaust denial and distortion, and the actions needed to combat these disturbing trends in the digital age.

SECTION 1: HONOURING LEGACIES

As children of Holocaust survivors, Annette Wildgoose and Rivka Augenfeld draw on their personal family histories to shape their commitment to preserving Holocaust memory and advocating for justice. Wildgoose, as President of the National Holocaust Monument in Ottawa, highlights the Monument's role not only in commemorating victims but also in educating future generations about the dangers of hatred and the importance of tolerance. Her dedication to remembrance is deeply personal, rooted in the legacy passed down by her mother and her unique way of honoring the family that was lost. Augenfeld, guided by her parents' legacy of resilience and social justice, channels this inheritance in her work with refugees and immigrants. Her article reflects on how the values of solidarity, dignity, and resilience, instilled by her parents, have guided her work in human rights and refugee advocacy. Augenfeld's commitment to justice is informed by her upbringing, where Holocaust memory was not only a historical lesson but a personal, moral calling to protect the vulnerable and fight for social justice. Annette and Rivka's shared sense of responsibility reflects a commitment to continuing the lessons passed down from their parents, ensuring that the memory of the Holocaust informs today's ongoing struggles for human rights and dignity.

Similarly, Jeffrey Kopstein, deeply influenced by his upbringing in Toronto surrounded by survivors, explores the lasting psychological and cultural impacts of the Holocaust on Jewish identity and memory. In his article, Kopstein examines how the Holocaust continues to shape Jewish identity, collective memory, and perceptions of antisemitism, even as Jewish communities have recovered demographically. Kopstein warns that as living memory fades, the lessons of the Holocaust risk becoming abstract or marginalized. He emphasizes the need for vigilance in preserving its memory through education and storytelling, especially as survivors and their children pass on.

SECTION 2: EDUCATING FOR EMPATHY

Holocaust education faces both traditional and modern challenges as educators seek to impart its lessons to younger generations. Naomi Azrieli and Jody Spiegel's article tackles one of the most pressing issues facing contemporary Holocaust education: "Holocaust fatigue." This phenomenon describes a growing disengagement with Holocaust narratives among students who are overwhelmed by the abundance of media portrayals of violence and trauma. Azrieli and Spiegel emphasize the crucial role of Holocaust testimonies in combatting this fatigue, as survivor accounts provide personal and deeply human insights that help students connect emotionally with the history. The authors argue that these testimonies should be central to Holocaust education, as they offer invaluable perspectives that transcend statistics and historical facts. However, they also caution that technological innovations like virtual reality should be used sparingly, ensuring that they complement rather than replace the profound impact of survivor narratives.

In their article on teaching the Holocaust in Quebec's secondary schools, Sivane Hirsch and

Sabrina Moisan provide a detailed analysis of the complexities involved in bringing Holocaust education into the classroom. They argue that teaching genocide requires an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on ethical, political, social, and pedagogical dimensions to help students engage with the sensitive nature of the subject. The authors highlight how Holocaust education challenges students' values and forces them to confront difficult questions about power dynamics, human behavior, and the dangers of dehumanization. Their pedagogical guide aims to foster critical thinking and empathy, ensuring that students grasp not only the historical facts of the Holocaust but also its relevance to contemporary issues such as racism and political oppression.

Frank Chalk's article considers Holocaust education both in and outside the classroom, focusing on university-level teaching and the role of museums and other institutions in preserving memory. Chalk argues that universities play a crucial role in Holocaust education, particularly in fostering critical thinking and analytical skills. He highlights the importance of survivor testimony as a pedagogical tool, alongside more innovative teaching methods such as online courses and virtual exhibitions. Museums like the Montreal Holocaust Museum are essential to creating a space for public education, where the history and lessons of the Holocaust can be experienced firsthand. Chalk also stresses the significance of connecting Holocaust education to broader studies of genocide, allowing students to draw parallels and apply the lessons learned to other human rights issues. His article suggests that innovative teaching methods, when integrated thoughtfully into curricula, can ensure that the Holocaust remains a powerful and relevant part of students' education.

SECTION 3: CONFRONTING MISINFORMATION

The rise of Holocaust denial and distortion presents one of the greatest challenges in ensuring that the lessons of the Holocaust continue to resonate. Deborah Lyons, Canada's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism, addresses these threats directly, outlining the Canadian government's initiatives to combat denial and antisemitism. She emphasizes the importance of mandatory Holocaust education, teacher training, and public programs to safeguard historical truth, while also highlighting the role of digital literacy in empowering young people to critically evaluate historical claims and combat misinformation. As part of Canada's National Holocaust Remembrance Program, these efforts aim to protect democratic values and foster a society where hatred and prejudice are not tolerated. Lyons stresses that combatting hatred and intolerance is not just about historical remembrance, but requires active vigilance to protect democratic values in the present, underscoring the urgency of preserving the Holocaust's moral imperatives for future generations.

International Chair of the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights and Canada's first Special Envoy on Holocaust Remembrance and Combatting Antisemitism, Irwin Cotler, echoes this call for action in his article on the universal lessons of Holocaust remembrance. Cotler emphasizes that remembrance is not just an act of commemoration but a call to action, urging individuals and governments alike to fight against hatred, intolerance, and injustice. He outlines key lessons from Holocaust memory, including the importance of standing up for the vulnerable, combatting state-sanctioned

hate, and holding those in power accountable for their actions. Cotler's article serves as both a warning and a call to arms, reminding us that preventing future atrocities requires active engagement and the courage to speak out against evil.

Jack Jedwab's analysis of a 2024 Canadian survey reveals a troubling rise in Holocaust skepticism, particularly among younger Canadians. His research shows that one in six Canadians aged 18–24 believe the Holocaust is exaggerated, with similar trends observed in the U.S. This skepticism is linked to the over-publicization of the event, confusion about the exact number of victims, and misinformation circulating on social media. Jedwab highlights the significant role of viral content in shaping historical perceptions, especially among young people, and notes that Holocaust skeptics often claim to have a good knowledge of genocides in history. This trend undermines trust in established historical facts and contributes to the normalization of denial and distortion. Moreover, Jedwab highlights that the influence of social media on undermining trust in historical information plays a pivotal role in driving skepticism, as an increasing number of young people turn to online sources for their information. He calls for more robust Holocaust education, critical media literacy, and efforts to engage younger audiences in order to preserve the historical truth and combat misinformation effectively.

CONCLUSION: ADAPTING HOLOCAUST EDUCATION TO A CHANGING WORLD

The articles in this collection highlight both the challenges and innovative strategies shaping Holocaust education and remembrance in Canada. As survivor testimonies become more distant and Holocaust denial grows, educators, advocates, and policy advisors are increasingly turning to creative solutions to preserve memory and combat misinformation. Central to this effort is the need to address the rising skepticism among younger generations, particularly in the context of social media, where much of this distortion is nurtured. To effectively counter this, a combination of continued research, strategic educational innovation, and engagement with emerging views is necessary. Through thoughtful pedagogy, public policy initiatives, and a steadfast commitment to justice and human dignity, the universal and timeless lessons of the Holocaust can endure, guiding our ongoing fight against hatred and ensuring that we learn the vital lessons of the horrors of the past.