



THE HOLOCAUST IN HISTORY AND MEMORY

VOL. 5 (2012)

EUTHANASIA KILLINGS:

THE TREATMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE IN
NAZI GERMANY AND DISABILITY SINCE 1945

ALSO:

HISTORY AND LEGACY OF THE
JEWISH AND THE 'GYPSY' HOLOCAUST

EDITED BY RAINER SCHULZE

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The Holocaust in History and Memory
Vol. 5 (2012)

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TEACHING ABOUT T4

DANNY M. COHEN, Northwestern University, Illinois

With contributions from Kay Andrews, Morgan Blum, Juliette Brungs, Jeremy Leigh, Sara A. Levy, John T. Pawlikowski and Alexis Storch

Whilst Holocaust academics are in little doubt about the importance of the T4 programme as the foundation of the Nazis' murderous policies, whether and how Holocaust educators and educational designers address this part of history differs across countries, museums, schools and classrooms. Henry Friedlander asserts that 'euthanasia was not simply a prologue but the first chapter of Nazi genocide.'¹ Yet, educators teach about the Nazis' persecution of people with disabilities in different ways and for different reasons, and sometimes not at all. The inclusion or marginalisation of the disabled victims of Nazism within a curriculum, a textbook, a museum exhibition, or a guided tour of a historical site will depend on a number of factors, including availability of time, access to resources, and an educator's goals. Furthermore, whether and how the Nazi T4 programme is addressed within Holocaust education and commemoration is contingent on our agreed definitions of 'the Holocaust' and 'genocide.'

This report integrates reflections of seven educators and scholars from Germany, Israel, the UK and the US on how the history of the Nazis' persecution of people with disabilities fits within their ideas about Holocaust education. I sent a series of questions to these educators and scholars and asked them to reflect in writing on their beliefs, approaches, and experiences pertaining to teaching about the Nazi T4 programme. Their responses are integrated and presented here. Together, they underscore the challenges and tensions educators face when deciding whether and how to teach about the disabled victims of the Nazi era.

Reflecting on when she first learnt about the Nazis' persecution of people with disabilities, German literature teacher Juliette Brungs, a doctoral candidate in the Department of German, Scandinavian and Dutch at the University of Minnesota, writes:

¹ Friedlander (1995), p. xii.

I cannot tell when I heard about it the first time in my life, since I grew up in Germany as the daughter of a German-Jewish Holocaust survivor. My mother became a history teacher, so the most likely guess is, I had heard of *Aktion T4* and *Euthanasie* before I went to school at age 6. I learned about it in school (East Germany, the former German Democratic Republic, or GDR), I read books and watched documentaries. Nevertheless I was unable to attend the class on *Aktion T4* for which I had registered in 1991 at a class at Freie University (in West Berlin). I found the tone in the classroom so disrespectful to the victims, I ran out the first session and puked, and never returned to the class. The professor teaching the class was a well-known scholar in the research field, he had grown bitter over the years, and he hit the students over the head with the facts. Nevertheless, I always regretted having withdrawn from the class, so also in this regard the topic never left me.

The Nazis' systematic murder of Germans and Austrians with real and perceived disabilities – along with the elderly, people with terminal conditions, and seriously injured German soldiers – bears great significance within Holocaust history. The T4 programme provided the Nazis with data and the practical experience to develop their efficient methods of mass-murder to annihilate people of Jewish, Roma or Sinti descent.

Jeremy Leigh, a freelance Jewish educator based in Jerusalem, leads groups to sites of Jewish interest throughout Europe, including sites of Holocaust history. In reflecting on why his work has not focused on the disabled victims of Nazism, he explains how his 'main work in the field of Holocaust studies comes in the context of guiding Jewish sites in Europe.' Leigh articulates what he sees as a critical distinction between the disabled and Jewish victims of Nazism:

[...] the victims of T4 were rejected precisely because they were Aryan – the very opposite to Jews. [...] the intriguing element here is to reflect on Nazi theory as a critique of other forms of 'community' – citizen, nationality and so on. Jews and the German disabled were both citizens but rejected for very different reasons.

This notion of difference between victim narratives is reiterated by Alexis Storch, Director of Educational Outreach at The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education in Cincinnati, Ohio. Reflecting on the Holocaust curricula materials she works with and the museum tours she guides, Storch explains:

It has to be clear to students that individuals with disabilities did not have a separate experience during the Holocaust, but rather a different one. And as an educator I need to not only present these different victim narratives in an appropriate way, but highlight how all these different narratives are constantly intersecting. One cannot be studied without the other. For example, I aim to not only mention the Nazis' persecution of people with disabilities, but do so in a way that does not trivialise or marginalise the critical role the T4 programme and the persecution of individuals with disabilities played in the larger story of the rise of Nazism and the Holocaust.

Morgan Blum is the Director of Education for The Jewish Family and Children's Services Holocaust Center in San Francisco, California. Working as 'a resource for local educators who include a study of the Holocaust in their classrooms' at middle school, high school and college levels, Blum points out a tendency of educators to include the victims of the Nazi T4 programme as an afterthought:

I have observed that often the discussion of the 'other victims' is included as an addendum in a Holocaust curriculum (if there is time) following the history of Jewish persecution. This can lead to confusion and misconceptions, as chronologically the T4 programme came well before the 'final solution'.

The matter of chronology when teaching about Holocaust history is significant, particularly as the T4 programme is considered to be a precursor to the Nazis' decision to switch from shooting their Jewish, Roma and Sinti victims into open pits to suffocating them inside gas vans and, later, specially built gas chambers. The victim narratives of people with disabilities and of people of Jewish, Roma or Sinti descent can be seen as interdependent.²

Alexis Storch points out that the permanent exhibition at The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education 'is organised thematically, rather than chronologically, so one of the ways that I include the Nazis' persecution of individuals with disabilities is to place it in the larger chronology of the Holocaust.' At the same time, the thematic design of the museum allows Storch and her colleagues to go beyond the historical events and to highlight particular concepts across different victim narratives. For example, Storch explains that it is 'interesting for students to see that the German community reacted and protested against the T4 programme – to the shock of the Nazi government' – and how this 'forced the government to hide, rather than end the programme.' In this way, educators have the opportunity to facilitate a discussion about public and church-led outrage against the T4 programme as compared to the relative silence in the face of the Nazis' persecution and murder of people of Jewish, Roma or Sinti descent.

In addition to themes of public resistance to Nazi policy, the history of the T4 programme gives educators an opportunity to address the implications of Nazi euthanasia policies for so-called Aryan families. Unlike the Nazis' persecution of particular racial and religious groups, where Nazi policy was usually (but not always, in cases of intermarried Jews and so-called *Mischlinge*) directed at an entire family or community, in persecuting people with real and perceived disabilities, the Nazis marked individuals for murder. As Jeremy Leigh points out, 'the victims of T4 were rejected precisely because they were Aryan.' The same can be said of the homosexual victims of Nazism. These individuals were seen as an internal threat to the Nazis' ideals for a master race. Therefore, the Nazis' treatment – including pseudo-medical experimentation, severe neglect and murder – of people with disabilities raises questions about the victims' Aryan relatives and the boundaries of victimhood and suffering. That family members of the murdered disabled suffered profound trauma and loss leads us to ask: Should we consider family members of T4 victims as secondary victims of Nazism, even if the Nazis did not target them for direct persecution? If so, does it matter that some of these people supported the Nazis' murderous policies against other groups? The inclusion of the Nazi T4 programme within Holocaust curricula presents educators and their students with opportunities to explore the complexities of Holocaust history and challenges our tendency to simplify what we mean by victim, bystander, collaborator, Nazi sympathiser, and so on.³

² Cohen (2011).

³ With support from colleagues at Northwestern University and partner organisations, I am currently working to develop a new high-school Holocaust curriculum (working title 'The Train Curriculum') that integrates the history of the Nazi T4 programme within the narratives of the Nazis' many victim groups. The overarching goal of the curriculum is to help learners explore the interdependency of Jewish and non-Jewish Holocaust victimhoods.

Sara Levy, a researcher of the teaching and learning of the Holocaust at Wells College in New York, thinks back to her goals – and corresponding content and themes – for teaching about the Nazi T4 programme:

My primary objective was for the students to understand how the Holocaust came to happen – that it was not preordained or inevitable, but that it was planned and executed rationally and systematically by human beings. As part of this, I taught about the T4 programme as one step in the deliberate escalation of violence toward groups of people demonised and scapegoated by the Nazi regime. [...] I introduced the T4 programme and connected it to the actions that preceded and proceeded the program, like the incarceration and persecution of political opponents of the Nazi regime and the establishment of the death camps. I emphasised the escalation of actions taken by the Nazi regime and the lack of (public) opposition to such actions.

In his course on Holocaust history, theology scholar Father John Pawlikowski, an appointed member of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) Council and a member of the Illinois Holocaust and Genocide Commission, 'always' includes the Nazis' persecution of people with disabilities 'for two basic reasons.' Pawlikowski writes:

[...] the Holocaust was first and foremost rooted in biological racism. This is not to say that antisemitism was marginal. It was central in terms of the attack on the Jews. But the reason the Nazis began their efforts at human cleansing with the disabled is rooted in the primacy of biological racism.

Pawlikowski continues: 'Since my focus in the Holocaust course I teach is on ethical implications, the story of the disabled is central for a discussion of racism and especially medical ethics in our day.' Such justifications for including this content position the history of the Nazi T4 programme as a central and vital part of Holocaust education. Pawlikowski argues that 'the story of the disabled needs to be presented as an important and integrated part of Nazi ideology. It was not a side bar but central to the overall plan to create the biological super race.'

Kay Andrews, a lecturer at the Institute of Education's Centre for Holocaust Education at the University of London, expresses her concerns about some educators failing to distinguish between the Holocaust – defined by some as a uniquely Jewish event – and the T4 programme – which Andrews distinguishes as 'genocidal policy'.

Discussing the importance of this distinction, Andrews reflects on the Institute's research conducted with teachers on their approaches and attitudes to educating about the Holocaust:

The findings revealed that teachers did not use an historically accurate definition of the Holocaust. Instead of recognising the specificity of the Holocaust in relationship to the Jews the teachers included all victims of Nazi persecution in the term Holocaust. This approach fails to recognise the Nazi policy and motivation against different groups including those who suffered and were murdered as part of the T4 programme. As a result of the research we created a national Continuing Professional Development (CPD) programme available to teachers across England. When devising our programme we were keen to ensure that the Holocaust was defined in an historically accurate way, and that teachers were able to reflect on and learn about the other Nazi policies of persecution and genocide and the individual victims who suffered and died as a result of these differing policies.

Father: John Pawlikowski does not see the T4 programme as separate from the Jewish narrative of Nazi persecution. He points out a problem that educators face when trying to include the disabled victims of Nazism within Holocaust education:

The greatest challenge to inclusion of the disabled has been ignorance and the creation of a perspective by certain scholars and educators that the Holocaust only involved Jewish victims. Jewish victimisation must remain centre stage in the narrative presented to students but not the exclusive one.

Pawlikowski's position is in tension with those historians, scholars and educators who do not include the non-Jewish victims of Nazism within their definitions of 'the Holocaust.' A possible compromise to this tension is the approach that Jeremy Leigh takes around the inclusion of the disabled victims of Nazism, explaining, 'a Holocaust-centred education must of necessity establish context, and thus the broader terms of Nazi race theory become relevant.' Both approaches – whether the T4 programme should be given centrality or should provide historical context to the Jewish narrative – necessitate meaningful inclusion of the disabled victims of Nazism.

What may be problematic, however, is that framing the T4 programme as 'context' for the Jewish Holocaust narrative could lead learners to perceive a hierarchy across victim groups. Alexis Storch explains:

I do not believe that we need to study the persecution of people with disabilities, or any other victim group for that matter, because it will help us to learn more about another victim group. Doing so will create a hierarchy of victimhood that I am uncomfortable with and is against my philosophy as a Holocaust educator. Rather, when we study all these groups together, we gain a better understanding of the complexity of Nazi persecution and contribute to a better understanding of the history.

If educators are encouraged to use one victim group narrative to contextualise another, and not the other way around, they risk minimising the suffering of disabled victims and disregarding the significance of the T4 programme as a watershed event along the trajectory of Nazi policy.

Sara Levy draws a connection between the chronology of Holocaust history and her obligation to include the T4 programme in her teaching:

[...] the line from the beginning of the T4 programme to Auschwitz and Treblinka is fairly clear and linear. [...] I have never considered Nazi persecution of people with disabilities apart or separate from their persecution of other groups. While there are unique aspects of the Nazi rationalisations for the persecution of different groups, including people with disabilities, the fact remains that each of the persecuted groups suffered under Nazi rule with the support (tacit or otherwise) and acquiescence of their fellow German citizens. [...] I do not feel that there would be a way to responsibly and ethically teach about the Holocaust without including the Nazi persecution of people with disabilities.

Many educators and scholars emphatically agree that we must include the T4 programme within Holocaust education and commemoration. Yet, for a number of possible reasons, some teachers do not address this part of Holocaust history. Possible explanations for such exclusion include time available, content of curricula and texts, and what individual educators know and hope to achieve.

Alexis Storch addresses the lack of support Holocaust educators may face when deciding whether or not to teach about the T4 programme:

When I first began studying the Holocaust in depth, my focus was primarily on the Jewish victims of Nazism. This was not because I wanted to be exclusive or thought these [non-Jewish victim] experiences not critical to an examination of Holocaust history, but more so because I did not feel like I had the necessary tools to appropriately include these narratives. To some degree, I was overwhelmed with the enormity of the history. [...] Many educators know that multiple groups were targeted by the Nazis, but are unsure of the best and pedagogically sound way to incorporate these stories into the history. Often, when someone is unsure of the history or content, they will push it aside. No one wants to be asked a question they do not know the answer to. Therefore, not only do educators need to have access to more content knowledge, but [they] need to be informed about why the T4 programme, for example, is just as important to include as the Evian Conference, *Kristallnacht*, the voyage of the St. Louis or the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in discussions of the Holocaust. Perhaps even more importantly, they need to have administrators and support staff backing them up.

Storch asserts that, because Holocaust educators want to include the history of the T4 programme in classrooms and museums, she expects that materials will continue to be created to help educators address the Nazis' persecution of people with disabilities, writing, 'I have faith there are many educators out there who want to teach this, but just need the tools to do so.'

Reflecting on her experiences as a Holocaust educator, Sara Levy explains how the amount of time available determines what an educator can teach:

The challenges I have faced with this, as with all topics, is time. Therefore, determining what to include and what to exclude is always a question. I felt that mentioning the basic premise of the T4 programme was always crucial to any lesson on the Holocaust, but I was rarely able to delve deeper into the treatment of people with disabilities by the Nazis.

Likewise, Morgan Blum explains how educators only include the non-Jewish victims of Nazism if there is time to do so:

If a teacher has the time and flexibility to go beyond the traditional narrative of the Holocaust they have to choose between including the patterns of genocide; rescue and resistance; hidden children; and the 'other victims'. [...] Including all necessary components of the history of the Holocaust is nearly an impossible task.

Kay Andrews points out the freedom some Holocaust educators have when choosing content to teach. In discussing research on Holocaust education in England, referring to the inclusion of the T4 programme, she writes:

The findings show that teachers cherry-pick certain aspects relating to the Nazi regime to teach about, though what emerges is a perpetrator-led narrative that does not humanise the victim. Teachers were also unclear as to their own subject specific aims when teaching about the Holocaust.

Educators' intentions around what to teach are brought into question when we consider how, as Morgan Blum asserts, 'teachers tend to rely on what they previously know or can find

on the Internet.' Alexis Storch states: 'I refuse to believe that an educator would knowingly exclude or marginalise a group of individuals targeted by the Nazis because they think these experiences are not important.'

Educators' access to materials, as well as what those materials contain, will of course contribute to what is and is not taught in the classroom. While it is difficult to determine the extent to which the history of the T4 programme is included or excluded within Holocaust curricula, there appears to be a lack of educational resources and texts on T4 that are accessible to teenagers (as opposed to texts and materials more suitable for college level and scholarly research). While most contributors to this article praised the resources on the T4 programme available through USHMM, few other educational resources on T4 were recommended.⁴ The continued accessibility and inaccessibility to resources on the history of T4 will likely determine whether and how young people think about and relate to the disabled victims of Nazism.

Morgan Blum describes how she and her colleagues use USHMM resources on the non-Jewish victims of Nazism to teach about the T4 programme, recommending these materials because they are 'accurate, at the high school reading level, and free to download':⁵

One lesson I include in our student seminars is to divide the students into small groups and each group is assigned one of the 'other victim groups'. They use the USHMM booklet as a resource and after 30 minutes of research and small group discussion, each group gives a small presentation to their peers. Each student group becomes an 'expert' on one victim group and we are able to include several different narratives in one class period. The disabled group is also included in our discussion of propaganda. We print Nazi propaganda posters (the Calvin German Propaganda Archive is an amazing resource).⁶ Posters illustrating the disabled as a challenge for Germany are prominently featured in the lesson plan. Students respond well in this discussion of propaganda, and it is a good opportunity to include the disabled victims chronologically.

How learners might relate to and find relevant the lessons of Holocaust history can be a critical question for Holocaust educators. While much research has been conducted on how different parts of the Jewish community frame and teach about Holocaust history for particular reasons and in particular ways, it is not clear how students with disabilities have learnt and continue to learn about the history of the Nazi T4 programme. Sara Levy reflects on her experiences of teaching about the Holocaust to people with disabilities:

I have found that students are generally gratified to see groups to which they belong reflected in the curriculum. However, if the groups are constantly portrayed as victims or pawns in history, students tend to (correctly) demand that more viewpoints are presented about 'their' group. In the case of people with disabilities, it might be important to highlight families or individuals who attempted to fight back against the Nazi persecution without giving students the impression that the majority of people were

⁴ Kay Andrews recommended the Continuing Professional Development programme offered by the Institute of Education's Centre for Holocaust Education at the University of London; Alexis Storch recommended the Ann Clare LeZotte's novel *T4*, published in 2008.

⁵ USHMM, 'Mentally and Physically Handicapped: Victims of the Nazi Era', <http://www.ushmm.org/education/resource/handic/handicapped.php> (accessed 16 December 2012).

⁶ German Propaganda Archive: <http://www.calvin.edu/academic/cas/gpa/> (accessed 16 December 2012).

willing and/or able to engage in this kind of resistance. In this way, I would teach about people with disabilities in much the same way I taught about Jews – with attention paid to the acts of rescue and resistance (Jewish and non-Jewish) in order to demonstrate a more complex narrative.

Alexis Storch describes a specific experience of working with learners who identified as disabled:

I once gave a tour to a group of adults who were very open about their disabilities. [...] They were incredibly interested in learning more about the experiences of people with disabilities during this period, because one of our team members, who also identified as special needs, had encouraged them to visit the exhibit. They knew about the T4 programme, green triangles, the euthanasia centres and it was because my colleague had taught them about it. [...] As we toured the exhibit, we weaved in this additional narrative of how people with disabilities were persecuted.

Considering whether or not the history of the Nazi T4 programme should be taught or framed differently for learners who have disabilities, Storch writes:

Thinking about the tour I described above, I was definitely more sensitive to my audience. Arguably, much more so than I would have been giving a tour to an audience which was predominately Jewish, which is interesting. I think there always needs to be some sensitivity to one's audience, and effective educators are always aware of their audience, in terms of age, learning levels, etc., and being aware of your audience means creating the opportunity to make personal connections. We should always presume competence, especially when working with groups of individuals with special needs. But in general, no, I do not think that the history should be taught differently to different audiences.

In thinking about student perceptions of Holocaust history more broadly, Sara Levy explains the importance of paying attention to learners' comprehension of particular parts of Holocaust history. She writes:

Particularly for my younger students, who have grown up in inclusive classrooms and with more exposure in their daily lives to people with disabilities thanks to legislation such as the 'Americans with Disabilities' Act, the idea that the most vulnerable and innocent members of society would be targeted for elimination is very difficult to understand. They are more familiar with issues of racism and xenophobia, and therefore have the narrative templates to accommodate persecution based on race, religion or ethnicity. Persecution based on ability, however, is sometimes more difficult for them to comprehend due to narrative templates that do not permit official persecution of people with disabilities.

In this way, the historical and contemporary persecution of people with disabilities stand both together and apart. Just as some scholars and educators perceive the Nazis' persecution of Jews to stand entirely separately from the Nazis' persecution of disabled people (despite the fact that some individual victims fell into both categories), Levy's observation indicates a potential disconnect amongst young learners today about the historical relationship between prejudice against Jews and prejudice against people with disabilities. If different forms of prejudice, victimhood and corresponding empathy are kept separate within Holocaust education and

remembrance, then what are the implications for intercōmmunity solidarity, the ongoing struggle for civil and human rights and the necessary conversations about them?

Jeremy Leigh reflects on the sites throughout Berlin built to commemorate distinct victim groups of Nazism:

[...] in Berlin, there exist in close proximity a whole series of monuments and memorials stretching from the *Reichstag* foreground across the Tiergarten via the monument to Roma and Sinti, through the monument to homosexuals, up to T4 and then back to the Monument to the Murdered Jews of Europe. The route and thus the dynamic of educational tourism means that this comparative 'conversation' is effectively in operation. That said, the greater size and impact of the Holocaust monument tends to emphasise the comparative or contextual approach. The [Jewish] Holocaust was unique and thus, whilst these other monuments are very important and deserve due seriousness, intellectually they are different.

That the Jewish and disabled victims of Nazism may be memorialised in different ways is dependent on how we delineate the boundaries of Holocaust history. Equally, educators' decisions about whether or not to address the disabled victims of Nazism – and other non-Jewish victim groups – within Holocaust education will be guided in part by the definitions and lenses through which educators perceive the Holocaust.

The debate around whether or not people with disabilities – and other victim groups – should be included under the term 'Holocaust' is ongoing, especially as Holocaust museums and educational institutions around the world define the term differently. For example, Yad Vashem, established by Israel's Martyrs' and Heroes Remembrance Law, states:

The Holocaust, as presented in this resource center, is defined as the sum total of all anti-Jewish actions carried out by the Nazi regime between 1933 and 1945: from stripping the German Jews of their legal and economic status in the 1930s; segregating and starvation in the various occupied countries; the murder of close to six million Jews in Europe. The Holocaust is part of a broader aggregate of acts of oppression and murder of various ethnic and political groups in Europe by the Nazis.⁷

'The Holocaust', according to Yad Vashem, refers to the Nazis' persecution of Jews, which is separate from the Nazis' persecution of other 'various', unnamed groups of people. Other institutions uphold definitions that are more inclusive. For example, the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles, California – associated with the Simon Wiesenthal Center – defines 'the Holocaust' as follows:

The Holocaust took place in Europe between 1933 and 1945. Six million Jews were systematically and brutally murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators. Millions of non-Jews, including Roma and Sinti (Gypsies), Serbs, political dissidents, people with disabilities, homosexuals and Jehovah's Witnesses, were also persecuted by the Nazis.⁸

⁷ Yad Vashem, 'The Holocaust', http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/holocaust/resource_center/the_holocaust.asp (accessed 22 Mar 2013).

⁸ Museum of Tolerance, 'Vocabulary and Concepts', http://www.museumoftolerance.com/site/c.tmL6KfNVLtH/b.5063305/k.63A3/Vocabulary_and_Concepts.htm (accessed 22 Mar 2013).

Peter Novick explores the debates of the late 1970s over the definition to be adopted by the not-yet-built United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). Novick explains how President Carter's Commission on the Holocaust, headed by writer and Jewish Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, 'insisted on the Jewish specificity – the Jewish essence – of the Holocaust,' maintaining that 'any attempt to dilute or deny this reality would be to falsify it in the name of misguided universalism.'⁹ The 'Nazi Hunter' and Jewish Holocaust survivor Simon Wiesenthal was vocal in his disagreement with Wiesel's position:

Since 1948 [...] I have sought with Jewish leaders not to talk about six million Jewish dead, but rather about eleven million civilians dead, including six million Jews. [...] We reduced the problem to one between Nazis and Jews. Because of this we lost many friends who suffered with us, whose families share common graves.¹⁰

Yet, in 2013, the introductory text of the USHMM Encyclopedia reads: 'The Holocaust was the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of approximately six million Jews by the Nazi regime and its collaborators.'¹¹ The disabled victims – and other non-Jewish victims – of Nazism are certainly included within the permanent exhibition at the USHMM, as well as within the museum's online resources, but the museum frames non-Jewish experiences of Nazi persecution as separate from the 'Holocaust' narrative:

Although Jews, whom the Nazis deemed a priority danger to Germany, were the primary victims of Nazi racism, other victims included some 200,000 Roma (Gypsies). At least 200,000 mentally or physically disabled patients, mainly Germans, living in institutional settings, were murdered in the so-called Euthanasia Program.¹²

USHMM appears to differentiate between 'the Holocaust' as a Jewish event and 'Nazi racism', a more general term that includes Jews, Roma, and the disabled. In fact, the entry about the Nazi T4 programme in the USHMM Encyclopedia underscores this separation:

The so-called 'Euthanasia' programme was National Socialist Germany's first programme of mass murder, predating the genocide of European Jewry, which we call the Holocaust, by approximately two years.¹³

However, USHMM's texts sometimes include non-Jewish victim groups within the term 'Holocaust'. For example, when discussing the 'Genocide of European Roma', the USHMM Encyclopedia entry states: 'It is not known precisely how many Roma were killed in the Holocaust.'¹⁴ In this case, including the Roma victims of Nazism under the term 'Holocaust'

⁹ From a report to President Carter, overseen by Elie Wiesel (President's Commission on the Holocaust, *Report to the President*, Washington DC, 1979), cited in Novick (1999), p. 218.

¹⁰ From an interview with Wiesenthal conducted in 1979 by Michael Getler (Michael Getler, 'The Hunter's Remembrance', *Washington Post*, 1 April 1979), cited in Novick (1999), p. 215.

¹¹ USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, 'Introduction to the Holocaust', <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143> (accessed 22 March 2013).

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, 'Euthanasia Program', <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005200> (accessed 22 March 2013).

¹⁴ USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia, 'Genocide of European Roma (Gypsies) 1939–1945', <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005219> (accessed 22 March 2013).

may be purposeful or it may be an error. Or it could indicate an intended ambiguity over the question of which victim groups to include and which to exclude when it comes to defining the Holocaust and genocide.¹⁵

The matter of whether or not the disabled victims – and other non-Jewish victims – of Nazism should fall under the term ‘Holocaust’ or ‘genocide’ becomes imperative when we consider that, according to Article II of the United Nations’ Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime Genocide of 1948, the term ‘genocide’ applies only to atrocities committed against a ‘national, ethnical, racial or religious group.’¹⁶ We must ask: Where do we place the victims of the Nazi T4 programme? The question might also apply to the homosexual and political victims of Nazism, as they also do not fit under the United Nations’ ratified definition of ‘genocide.’ This leads to questions about what terminology educators should be using in the classroom and on museum tours and how to encourage young people to think about, write about, and remember Holocaust and genocide history.

Henry Friedlander offers us a solution – or at least a compromise – by suggesting we keep separate our definitions of ‘genocide’ and ‘Nazi genocide.’ Due to political and etymological complexities around the word genocide, Friedlander explains how he was ‘forced to define Nazi genocide – what is now commonly called the Holocaust – as the mass murder of human beings because they belonged to a biologically defined group.’¹⁷ It remains unclear, however, whether or not Holocaust museums and educational institutions will soon begin to characterise ‘the Holocaust’ in this way.

To be very clear, this is more than a problem of semantics. When states and education boards mandate Holocaust and genocide education, definitions matter. With limited time and resources, educators around the world often look to authoritative Holocaust educational organisations – particularly the USHMM and Yad Vashem – to decide upon what content to teach. The United Nations’ ratified definition of ‘genocide’ renders its application to the disabled victims of Nazism as problematic. The exclusion of the Nazis’ persecution of people with disabilities from definitions of ‘the Holocaust’ gives Holocaust educators tacit permission to gloss over or even omit altogether the history of T4.

Consequently, it behooves educators to help students engage explicitly with questions about definitions and categories of victimhood under Nazism. Let us share with our young learners dependable yet contradictory definitions of ‘the Holocaust’ and ‘genocide’. Let students examine and debate the competing justifications for the inclusion and exclusion of particular victim groups. After all, if we expose learners to the complexities of historiography and ongoing historiographical disputes, they will be better prepared to inherit the responsibilities of remembering and teaching about the Nazis’ atrocities.

¹⁵ Novick (1999).

¹⁶ Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, adopted by Resolution 260 (III) A of the United Nations General Assembly on 9 December 1948, <http://www.hrweb.org/legal/genocide.html> (accessed 16 Dec 2012).

¹⁷ Friedlander (1995), p. xii.

Contributors

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began her career as a secondary school teacher before joining the Holocaust Educational Trust, London, later becoming Head of Education. In 2009 she moved to the newly created Centre for Holocaust Education at the Institute of Education, University of London. Her work focuses on creating innovative teacher education programmes relating to the Holocaust. She is also interested in gender representations of the Holocaust and other genocides. Kay has been a member of the UK delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (formerly ITF) since 2005 and currently chairs the Communications Working Group. She has spoken at conferences around the world on issues relating to Holocaust education.

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is the Director of Education with the Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS) Holocaust Center, San Francisco. Originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, Morgan graduated cum laude from Clark University, Massachusetts, with a BA in History specialising in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. At Deakin University in Melbourne, Australia, Morgan focused her Master's thesis on the forced removal of Aboriginal children as a case of genocide. In her current position at the JFCS Holocaust Center, Morgan teaches seminars, mentors high school students through an advanced fellowship study of the Holocaust and patterns of genocide, develops curricula and leads professional development workshops for educators. Each year Morgan, together with a Holocaust survivor, leads an educational journey to Germany, Poland and Israel for high-school and college students. She is an active member of the San Francisco Bay Area Darfur Coalition and sits on the advisory boards of the Genocide Education Project and the Farkas Center for the Study of the Holocaust in Catholic Schools.

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Jeremy Leigh

received his BA and MA in Jewish History at University College London and the Hebrew University, Jerusalem. He has lectured at various institutions including Hebrew Union College, Hebrew University School for Overseas Students, Machon L'Madrichei Chutz La'Aretz, Yad Vashem, and Young Judea Year Course. His work in the field of Jewish travel has been extensive, developing numerous Jewish programmes in Europe and Canada as well as writing various travel guides for organisations such as the Holocaust Educational Trust, United Jewish Israel Appeal of the UK and Jewish Federations of Canada, UJA. Jeremy is the author of *Jewish Journeys* (2006), a cultural and personal reflection on the idea of the Jewish travel. Acknowledged as one of the great Jewish travel educators and setting the standard for work in this field all over Europe, Jeremy now teaches the guides in preparatory work for the inclusion of travel to Poland in the curriculum of state schools in the UK. Originally from the UK and a graduate of the Reform Zionist youth movement, RSY-Netzer, Jeremy now lives in Israel.

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John T. Páwlikowski, OSM,

is a priest of the Servite Order and serves as Professor of Social Ethics at the Catholic Theological Union in Chicago where he also directs the School's Catholic-Jewish Studies programme. He has been involved in Christian-Jewish relations and in a study of the Holocaust, particularly its ethical dimensions as well as the situation of its non-Jewish victims, for over 40 years. He was appointed to the original board of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by President Jimmy Carter and subsequently reappointed by President George Bush sen. and twice by President Bill Clinton. He was centrally involved with the creation of the Museum's building as well as its permanent exhibition and was a founding member of its Committee on Conscience. He currently serves on the Museum's Ethics, Religion and the Holocaust Commission. He is also a member of the Illinois Commission on Holocaust and Genocide by appointment of Governor Patrick Quinn.

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is the Director of Educational Outreach with the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has served as the Youth Educator for the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center, interned with the Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh, and was an English language instructor in Berlin, Germany. She has presented on the Holocaust to The Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage, the Community College of Allegheny County, and various parent/teacher associations. Alexis is a Lerner Fellow and Irena Sendler Scholar. She holds an undergraduate degree in History and Women Studies from the University of Pittsburgh, and a Master's degrees in European History from Binghamton University and in Elementary Education from Roosevelt University. Her research focused on examining women's experiences during the Holocaust, and contemporary Holocaust memory.

Further Reading

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<http://www.museumoftolerance.com>
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum:
<http://www.ushmm.org>
- Yad Vashem:
<http://www.yadvashem.org>