

Nearly sixty years after spending her 18th birthday in a Nazi concentration camp, Anna Ornstein will share her story with visitors to the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education (CHHE) at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati.

“It’s very important to share the experiences we had,” Ornstein said. “We have to be able to speak to children.”

Liberated by Russian troops from camp Parschnitz in the former Czech Republic, Ornstein is one of the many Holocaust survivors who are working with the CHHE on a project called *Mapping Our Tears*. This interactive video-documentary exhibition, opening on November 10th, will document the experiences of 50 Holocaust survivors and liberators in the greater Cincinnati tristate community. *Mapping Our Tears* and



▲ Educators from the greater Cincinnati tristate area during the annual teacher training seminar at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C. sponsored by HUC-JIR’s Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education.

Brundibar, a children’s opera composed at Terezin; lectures at Jewish, Christian, and secular venues during Holocaust Awareness Week; and presentation of the exhibition “Rebirth After the Holocaust: The Bergen Belsen Displaced Persons Camp, 1945-1950” at the Cincinnati Museum Center.

challenge in spreading Holocaust awareness today is to communicate with groups, such as children, who may not have yet been sufficiently included in the educational process,” she added. High School students are being trained as docents for *Mapping our Tears* and other exhibits.

TEACHING

The Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education at HUC-JIR/Cincinnati

a myriad of other projects involving Holocaust education reflect the breadth of creativity and outreach undertaken by the Center’s director, Dr. Racelle E. Weiman.

The CHHE was inaugurated in September 2000 and has achieved prominence in Cincinnati. Weiman defined the Center’s mission: “To honor and dignify every human voice and every Jewish life. Every life is valuable and the dignity of each human experience has to be celebrated.” Devoted to Holocaust education, the Center has introduced Holocaust history to new and diverse audiences and provided training to educators and classes for students.

Highlights of the CHHE’s first year include workshops with 1000 students attending the Cincinnati Opera’s performances of

Weiman explains that the CHHE, jointly sponsored by HUC-JIR and the Combined Generations of the Holocaust of Greater Cincinnati, is in a unique position to ask questions and address concerns. “We have a special mandate because we are in a theological institution,” she said. “We can question God and faith after the Holocaust and the role of religion in human and civil rights.”

She wants the Center to educate and promote “courage and moral fiber” by learning from the Holocaust experience. “These are specifically issues that have to do with confronting yourself,” Weiman said. “It’s a question of ethics, morality, faith, and spirit.”

Ornstein echoed the CHHE’s mission. “To teach the Holocaust means to teach about morality and responsibility,” she said. “The

Weiman, too, wants the CHHE to reach out to traditionally unengaged groups. “Both Jews and people of other faiths and ethnicities need to be able to feel that they can ask questions,” she said. “We’ve had students from the Urban League with whom I’ve spoken about prejudice, how education gives you a voice. They were absolutely amazed. They realized prejudice has nothing to do with the color of your skin, but what’s in the heart of the perpetrator.”

“We talk about resistance, we talk about courage, expression of art, music, and righteousness. Whoever comes to the Center gets drawn in by an aspect that challenges them. There is a universal appeal because prejudice is a universal problem.”

Weiman would like to form a partnership with the National Underground Railroad

Freedom Center, which is scheduled to open in Cincinnati in two years. “The presence of the NURFC will strengthen education about the African-American and Jewish experiences of prejudice,” she noted.

This Spring’s outbreak of racial violence in Cincinnati has demonstrated the special role that the CHHE can play in building a more tolerant society.

Jerome Manigan, an adult literacy education teacher in Cincinnati and a CHHE board member, thinks the Center can help build a bridge between Jews and African-Americans. Manigan said he would like to see relations between Jews and African-Americans return to the “greater alliance” they shared during the civil rights movement. In May 2000, Manigan took his 20-student class, the bulk of whom are African-American, to the Center.

The Center has also reached out to Cincinnati youth through its internship program. Since opening its door, 10 interns have worked at the CHHE on projects such as *Mapping Our Tears*, developing educational curriculum, and assisting the Center’s administration. A newly established fund, created by Holocaust survivor Esther Lucky on the occasion of her 80th birthday, provides a scholarship stipend for college interns.

Sally Kuitz, a 19-year-old junior at Indiana University, has interned at the Center since May, working on youth leadership, publicity, and *Mapping Our Tears*. Kuitz, who is related to Holocaust survivors through her mother, documents testimony from survivors and liberators of the Holocaust. Kuitz works hands-on with survivors and liberators and the personal artifacts that are part of their experiences during the Holocaust.

“It’s hard not to get emotional,” she said. “If I look at a picture I think ‘that could have been a person who was related to me.’”

Though it can be emotionally draining work, Kuitz said she is committed to the CHHE’s projects because of personal experiences. In 1999, Kuitz visited a concentration camp in Poland. After seeing the camp, Kuitz said she feels privileged to talk to the survivors and liberators.

Kuitz said her work at the CHHE has deepened her understanding of the Holocaust. She added that visitors to the Center have received the exhibitions well and been “supportive and enthusiastic” of the survivors and their stories.

“To be able to listen to them, it’s not a burden, but a responsibility,” she said.

TOLERANCE

memorializes the Holocaust in order to combat injustice and prejudice today.

“As an educator, I wanted to be able to talk more in depth with my students about major world events, and certainly the Holocaust was a major world event, just as slavery,” he remarked.

According to Manigan, much of slavery’s written history is unavailable. The CHHE gave his students access, which they would not normally have, to primary source material about human victimization during the Holocaust, enabling them to “understand the evil of man’s inhumanity to men,” he said.

“It was a thought provoking experience for them to be able to view artwork that was produced by children who were confined to concentration camps,” Manigan said. “It allowed them to expand their humanity and their compassion.”



▲ Dr. Racelle Weiman, Director of the Center for Holocaust and Humanity Education, conducted workshops with the Cincinnati Opera’s Brundibar cast members on the topic of spiritual resistance.