

# STRASSLER CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST & GENOCIDE STUDIES

AT CLARK UNIVERSITY



## MEN WHO HAD HITHERTO CONCEALED WHAT THEY TOOK PLEASURE IN NOW GROW BOLDER,”



the historian Thucydides observed of plague stricken Athenians in his History of the Peloponnesian War. His vivid description of the deadly outbreak that decimated Athens in the second year of the war with Sparta merits attention under the current circumstances of pandemic. Death and suffering on a vast scale threatened 5th century Athenian democracy and tested the moral strength of its citizens. Indeed, pandemics, like war, expose flaws in individuals and societies. Only time will tell the extent of the fissures from the coronavirus to life, politics, and culture around the globe. Scholars will eventually plumb the parallels between pandemics and genocide; they will examine the extent to which human actions magnify the impact and consequences of natural disasters for vulnerable populations.

While the coronavirus shaped the spring semester the 2019-20 academic year began with the subject of agency. How historical actors behave under extreme circumstances, a matter that intrigued Thucydides, was the theme of the symposium, *Agency in the Holocaust and Genocide*, held in September 2019. To celebrate the opening of the Colin-Flug Graduate Study wing, we invited PhD alumni to present papers that examined individual action or inaction from multiple perspectives. Our co-edited volume (Palgrave Studies in the History of Genocide 2020) collected these essays into a festschrift honoring Professor Debórah Dwork. The symposium also commemorated two decades of PhD training at the Strassler Center and mirrored one held in September 1909, that recognized Clark's twentieth anniversary as a doctoral institute. On that historic occasion, Sigmund Freud gave his only American lectures on psychoanalysis.

Celebrating this milestone anniversary, we heralded an ambitious agenda for the Strassler Center. The vision proposes new areas of research and teaching that include reckoning with the legacy of racial violence that is central to the American story, advancing research on genocides in Africa, Asia, and the Americas, engaging with human rights and genocide prevention, broadening scholarship on the Armenian genocide to include Ottoman violence against other Christian communities, and strengthening Holocaust scholarship including serious engagement with its memory and the threat of growing antisemitism. Despite the challenges of a truncated academic year we successfully

advanced these plans. Generous friends pledged gifts to establish a David P. Angel Chair dedicated to Holocaust pedagogy and the study of antisemitism and to install a position on genocide studies and genocide prevention. We plan to collaborate with the Hiatt Center for Urban Education and other programs at Clark to promote greater appreciation for the relationship between education and understanding about antisemitism, racism, human rights, genocidal violence, and prevention of atrocity.

A highlight of the year was the successful search for a new Rose Professor of Holocaust Studies and Jewish History and Culture that yielded our first-choice candidate Frances Tanzer. She stood out among an especially strong applicant pool. Having spent two years with us as a visiting professor, Professor Tanzer has already demonstrated the impact of her impressive talents as an instructor and mentor of graduate and undergraduate students. Her path-breaking research into the meaning of Jewish absence in the context of post-Nazi Vienna is the subject of a forthcoming book. And her next book project, *Klezmer Dynasty*, will examine her own family history in East-Central Europe. Tanzer addresses the experience of refugee communities in her research and teaching and thus engages with current global and domestic issues. Given her commitment to examining history through the lens of contemporary crises, Tanzer assigned her Holocaust history students to archive news reports, social media posts, and their own observations about the pandemic.

George Washington who witnessed the ugliness of war wrote, "My first wish is to see this plague of mankind, war, banished from the earth." We have yet to achieve an end to war or to the many other plagues that afflict humanity but we hope that scholarship and education will generate deeper understanding that will hasten this wish. With your interest and support, we hope to light the way.

**MARY JANE REIN, PHD,**  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**THOMAS KÜHNE, PHD,**  
DIRECTOR AND STRASSLER COLIN FLUG PROFESSOR

The image features a complex abstract composition. A large, stylized number '1' is rendered in a vibrant yellow-green color, positioned on the left side. The background is a grid of white and light gray lines. Various rectangular blocks in solid blue and yellow-green are scattered across the page. A prominent yellow-green block in the lower-left corner contains a dark, branching, organic texture. The word 'EVENTS' is printed in a bold, dark blue, sans-serif font in the upper right quadrant. A larger, semi-transparent version of the word 'EVENTS' is overlaid in the center of the page, appearing in a light gray color with a subtle texture.

**EVENTS**

EVENTS

## DEBORAH DWORK, “AMERICANS IN DANGEROUS TERRITORY: RELIEF AND RESCUE OPERATIONS DURING THE NAZI YEARS”

19 September 2019

Renowned scholar Debórah Dwork, the inaugural Rose Professor and founding director of the Strassler Center, returned to Clark to deliver the keynote address for the opening of the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing. Drawing from her current book project on American relief and rescue workers, Dwork described several little-known Americans, “intrepid souls,” who hurdled into action to aid Jews during the Holocaust. Dwork underscored the timeliness of her research given that we face the greatest refugee crisis since that era. With her focus on female aid workers, Dwork explored the transformative experiences of relief and rescue. Most significantly, she introduced a new turn in Holocaust scholarship: providence, chance, and human emotions. Her project plumbs the role of the unpredictable, and what she named, the “irrational.” She urged historians to take emotions seriously in analyzing the past, and particularly, to engage with the role of the “irrational” in Holocaust Studies.

Dwork presented three case studies of American relief workers whom she affectionately called *My Americans*: Prague 1939, Shanghai 1941, and Marseille 1942. In the first case, she examined the relief efforts of the American Unitarian Association and their ties of kinship with the Czech Unitarian community. Unitarian minister Waitstill Sharp and his wife, Martha, volunteered to go to Prague to render relief and emigration services. The Sharps, primarily Martha, worked on clandestine rescue activities, and handled the emigration of some 3,500 Czech families. In her account, Dwork highlighted the transformative nature of these rescue efforts, especially on Martha. As a result of her wartime experiences she entirely “outgrew the role of minister’s wife” and the Sharps eventually divorced.

Dwork’s second case examined the experiences of JDC (Jewish Joint Distribution Committee) field agent Laura Margolis. Stationed in Shanghai in May 1941, she provided aid to the community of 20,000 Jewish refugees. Following the December attack on Pearl Harbor, her relief activities evolved as she and the Jewish refugees were trapped under Japanese Control. Margolis shouldered the enormous responsibilities of relief work but explained, provocatively, that neither the Japanese nor their occupation were her main problem. Rather, Margolis identified the antiquated and misogynistic ideals that members of the Jewish community espoused regarding her relief efforts.

Dwork concluded with the case of Marjorie McClelland, who travelled to Marseille, France, to undertake emigration activities for



Debórah Dwork

USCOM (United States Committee for the Care of European Children). McClelland had the difficult task of selecting children for emigration, and her experiences highlight the complexities involved in such fraught decision-making. McClelland attempted to apply a rational calculus in her selections, but irrational factors played a role, too. Her personal feelings and connections with certain children influenced her selections, even if they were not “ideal” candidates for emigration.

In light of her commitment to considering the “irrational,” Dwork closed her lecture with the Strassler Center’s foundational story. She related her fortuitous meeting with David Strassler on an Anti-Defamation League trip to Warsaw, Poland in 1994. Sitting next to Dwork on the bus from Warsaw to Auschwitz, Strassler inquired, “Where would a young person go to get the Holocaust education you have?” To which Dwork replied, “no place.” As chair of the Clark University board, Strassler then collaborated with Clark President Richard P. Traina and the Rose family, to establish the first-ever endowed chair of Holocaust Studies, which she came to hold. Dwork emphasized how chance led to the formation of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University. Dwork probed, “what were the odds that Strassler would sit with me on the bus? That his idea would appeal to the University and to the Rose Family?” Dwork’s conclusion: this program, too, was born from chance and fortuitous circumstance. The audience gathered to celebrate the official opening of the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing because of a “conversation between a scholar and a philanthropist, on a bus from Warsaw to Auschwitz, in the last decade of the twentieth century.”

Hana Green

## SYMPOSIUM: “AGENCY IN THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE”

20 September 2019

The Strassler Center organized the symposium *Agency in the Holocaust and Genocide* to mark two decades of doctoral training and to celebrate the scholarship of founding director and inaugural Rose Professor Debórah Dwork. Eleven of her former doctoral advisees returned to Clark University to present papers that analyzed agency during genocide, a topic that Dwork explored extensively in her own research and teaching.

The first panel, *Gender Dynamics*, examined the role of women in genocide and its aftermath. Sara Brown PhD '16 showed how women operated as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and rescuers during the Rwandan genocide. Despite the society's deeply patriarchal system, Rwandan women were “ordinary women” who had agency over their lives and the decisions they made. Sarah M. Cushman PhD '10 explored how sexuality, sexual violence, and sexual agency affected the lives of female prisoners in the women's camp of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Cushman shed light on the horrendous sexual violence and slavery that women encountered as well as the forms of sexual agency women demonstrated, such as seeking intimacy and deploying sexual barter as a survival strategy. Christine Schmidt PhD '03 analyzed the work of Eva Reichmann, one of Schmidt's predecessors as head of research at the Wiener Library in London. Reichmann, a German-Jewish refugee living in London since 1939, initiated an early postwar project to collect testimonies of Holocaust survivors while their memories were still fresh. Reichmann strongly believed that these personal experiences were crucial for the study of the Nazi period as victim perspectives were omitted in perpetrator records.

*Youth and Identity* was the theme for the second panel. Jeff Koerber PhD '15 and Beth Cohen PhD '03 explored how children exerted agency before, during, and after the Holocaust. Drawing on autobiographies of Jewish youth collected by the Vilnius-based *Yidisher Visnshaftlekher Institut* (YIVO, Jewish Scientific Institute) during the 1930s, Koerber considered how social engagement, perceived social injustice, and Jewish solidarity in the prewar lives of Jewish youth shaped their experiences during the Holocaust. Cohen focused on the struggle over Jewish female child survivors, most of them orphans, brought from DP camps to the Swedish town of Lidköping for recuperation. Ultra-orthodox rabbis established a girls' school, which aimed at restoring Torah Judaism through Jewish religious education. They quarreled with Zionists over the future of these girls, many of whom eventually immigrated to Israel.

The presenters in the third panel drilled down on issues of *Rescue and Relief*. Joanna Sliwa PhD '16 discussed the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee's (JDC, the Joint) relief efforts in German-



Debórah Dwork, with current doctoral students and PhD alumni

occupied Poland, focusing on the town of Bobowa where the Joint's local branch opened a soup kitchen to feed the local Jewish community. Despite the severe threats to their lives but perhaps thanks to the Joint's relief activities, Bobowa's Jews still envisioned a future for themselves, until the Germans murdered them in 1942. Ilana Offenberger PhD '10 offered a case study of a gentile family who preserved the possessions of their Jewish neighbors in the Czech town of Velké Meziříčí. The Flouma family secured the belongings of their Jewish neighbors, the Mueller family, after their deportation to Terezín. Although

the Nazis succeeded in eradicating almost all Jewish traces in Velké Meziříčí, the rescued belongings remind us of the once thriving Jewish community in that town. Dottie Stone PhD '10 examined the close involvement of first lady Eleanor Roosevelt in American rescue efforts aimed at assisting European Jews and children. Stone suggested that perhaps Roosevelt's own tragic upbringing contributed to her dedication to these rescue and relief initiatives.

The final panel addressed *Cultures of Memory and Reconciliation*. Stefan Ionescu PhD '13 analyzed the restitution of Jewish jobs in Romania after the August 1944 overthrow of the Antonescu regime. Antonescu had implemented antisemitic Romanization policies, including the removal of Jews from their jobs. In the postwar period, the restitution of Romanized jobs met with antisemitic resistance from employers and negative public opinion. Nonetheless, the lobbying efforts of Jews proved successful in securing justice for many. Raz Segal PhD '13 explored how Hungarian complicity in the Holocaust is intentionally minimized and misconstrued. This distorted collective memory ironically serves the present government's political agenda that revolves around the revival of the idea of an ethno-national “Greater Hungary.” Thus, the Hungarian government recruits global Holocaust memory in support of its anti-immigration policies. Adara Goldberg PhD '12 showed that Canada's refusal to deny the *M.S. St. Louis* safe haven in the spring of 1939 shaped the country's postwar Jewish community and their relationship to subsequent immigration and international refugee crises. Canadian Jews became humanitarian leaders in response to the fall of Saigon (1975) and the ongoing Syrian war (since 2011), supporting and sponsoring the resettlement of Indochinese and Syrian refugees in Canada.

In sum, the papers reflected the major research themes that Professor Dwork herself has been working on during her academic career. The symposium made clear that her former advisees represent a new generation of Holocaust and genocide scholars.

*Daan de Leeuw*

## PANEL DISCUSSION: “DOCUMENTING MASS CRIMES AND ENVISIONING JUSTICE FOR SYRIANS”

17 October 2019

Documenting war crimes and pursuing justice for victims is fraught with legal, social, and economic difficulties. Who is responsible for documenting crimes? How is documentation disseminated to the international community? How do victims seek justice? Who grants justice and what form does it take? Scholars Noha Aboueldahab (Foreign Policy Fellow, Brookings Institution), Ora Szekely (Professor, Clark University), and Radwan Ziadeh (Senior Fellow, United States Institute of Peace), addressed these questions in a discussion about the ongoing Syrian conflict, local civilian documentation efforts, and potential transitional justice initiatives. Szekely opened with a brief overview of the conflict and its actors. A series of peaceful, nonviolent protests against the Assad regime evolved into the Syrian Civil War. The regime responded violently to protests, shooting into crowds, besieging large cities, and walling off urban areas to prevent the supply of food and water to local populations, resulting in starvation. Major actors in the conflict include the opposition (Free Syrian Army, local militias, and Turkish proxies), the Assad Regime, the Kurds (Syrian Democratic Forces), and ISIS. Relationships between these actors are fluid, as the allied and warring parties shift allegiances. The civil war is comprised of multiple conflicts that reflect local, regional, national, and international interests.

Ziadeh focused his comments on the humanitarian situation in his hometown of Darayya, which has seen heavy fighting throughout the conflict. Dubbed Syria’s “barrel bomb capital,” Darayya has been subject to devastating airborne bombs. Ziadeh described five main tactics that the government uses to target civilian communities: (1) air force and airborne weapons that provide an unfair tactical advantage; (2) prohibited weapons of war such as chemical weapons and long-range missiles; (3) siege of opposition areas in a “surrender or starve” effort that limits medical care for victims of chemical weapons; (4) use of torture and sectarian violence; and (5) forced displacement of populations. These tactics all amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. Only about one percent of barrel bomb fatalities are among fighting actors, demonstrating that they are intended to target civilians. The Assad regime subjects civilian populations to frequent displacements and disappearances. The effects of the civil war have been devastating to the entire population, destroying homes, hospitals, schools, and infrastructure, as well as massive personal destruction and repossession of property and goods by the government.

Aboueldahab highlighted the difficulties involved in the documentation and prosecution of these war crimes. While various actors are engaged in detailing mass crimes, the greatest percentage are civilians who are not professionally trained in documenting atrocities. This presents challenges as the evidence needs to meet legal standards in international courts. Nonetheless, documentation of any standard is valuable for the preservation of historical



Ora Szekely

truths. In many instances, documentation is a source of empowerment and resistance for victims of mass crimes, especially for those whose expectations for legal justice have not been met. Trying perpetrators in the international arena, often at the International Criminal Court, is costly for states devastated by war. Moreover, states serving in the International Criminal Court may have been complicit in their actions regarding the crimes on trial.

Syrian efforts to pursue justice both locally and internationally exemplify the argument that justice is a process and not a definitive outcome. Transitional justice is fluid, insofar as it does not always entail the transformation of a violent governing power into a peaceful, democratic state. Still, the pursuit of justice on the part of local actors and the documentation carried out by Syrians can enable future prosecutions and justice processes in Syria and around the world.

*Jessa Sinnott*

## PANEL DISCUSSION: “GENOCIDE. ECOCIDE. CLIMATE CATASTROPHE: NAMING IT, OWNING IT, AND GOING FROM HERE”

23 October 2019

As we are inundated with growing evidence of environmental destruction, how are we to respond? What can we do to alleviate the looming crisis? The Strassler Center partnered with A New Earth Conversation, a recently established Clark University initiative, to tackle these questions in a panel discussion, *Genocide. Ecocide. Climate catastrophe: Naming it, owning it, and going from here*. Roy Scranton (Associate Professor of English, University of Notre Dame) and Christian Parenti (Associate Professor of Economics, John Jay College) presented divergent perspectives on the climate crisis.

In describing the threat of ecological disaster, Scranton detailed alarming statistics related to climate change, mass extinctions, and rising global temperatures. Not only are these devastating processes worsening, but they are happening at greater speeds than previously predicted. Scientists underestimate the severity of the threat, according to Scranton, because the agreed upon statistics they report are far less devastating than the evidence dictates. The eventual impact of climate change will be catastrophic. Economic and political repercussions to resource scarcity will entail a rise in demagoguery, where authoritarian leaders will deal harshly with those displaced by climate catastrophes; increases in armed conflicts, pandemics, and religious fervor; and lastly, nuclear war. Rolling food catastrophes could threaten civilization through endless food riots and peoples' inability to meet basic needs. However, these predictions assume that rates of ecological destruction, such as greenhouse gas production and climate change, continue at current rates. What can we do? Scranton argued that we need to acknowledge that our cultural frameworks cannot grapple with the gravity of the coming situation. Yet, we should have faith in humanity's ability to overcome adversity in order to face the approaching catastrophe. Rather than trying to repair the damage already done, he asserts that we have to accept a future fundamentally unlike the present in order to move forward.

By contrast, Parenti advocated tangible strategies that the United States could take to minimize the crisis. He asserted that humans are environment-creating beings, so the task at hand is to determine how to create sustainable environments. He argued that the US has the technology, money, and laws to overhaul the reindustrialization of society. To achieve a meaningful transformation will demand federal policies. Parenti proposed that the federal government transfer the investment of economic resources away from fossil fuels and



(left to right) Christian Parenti, Thomas Kühne, Roy Scranton, and Sarah Buie

towards renewable energy. He asserted that the private sector can also contribute to overhauling the energy industry, but the federal government has to step in to establish a renewable energy base. For example, the federal government should retrofit its old buildings to make them sustainable, and all government vehicles should be made electric. A federal example would influence states to make similar changes. Parenti called for the redistribution of wealth from the richest individuals and the defense budget toward radically reforming energy structures. As an example, with the federal government's involvement, electric vehicles could be made cheaper than fossil fuel vehicles. Parenti argued that no one political camp is to blame for the current catastrophe: liberal elites have failed to challenge capitalists while conservatives have failed to use their majority in government to lead change. Without federal involvement and consensus around change, Parenti doubts that we can address the crisis. He suggested that adopting a politics of radical reform would be more productive than the simple condemnation of capitalism. The collapse of civilization will not engender a more beneficent society. Rather, we need to de-commodify and attack the power of the rich.

The speakers differing perspectives led to a lively debate about how best to proceed, moderated by the co-organizers, Professors Sarah Buie and Thomas Kühne. While Scranton saw no historical precedent for such a radical overhaul and offered a bleak view of the future, Parenti felt little satisfaction over Scranton's lack of advocacy for action in the present. Eventually, this panel pointed to the urgent need for intensified discussions about how to resolve the ever-worsening global environmental crisis.

*Ellen Johnson*

## ADAMA DIENG, “GENOCIDE OF THE TUTSIS IN RWANDA: 25 YEARS LATER”

6 November 2019

During the 1994 genocide against the Tutsis in Rwanda, close to one million Rwandans were massacred over the course of 100 days. Twenty-five years later, Rwanda serves as a somber reminder of the international community’s failure to intervene. Professor Shelly Tenenbaum, Coordinator of the undergraduate program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, invited Adama Dieng, the United Nations Secretary-General’s Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide, to commemorate the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide. A diverse audience of roughly 200 people attended this “Especially for Students Lecture.” A legal and human rights expert, Dieng has had a distinguished career working to strengthen the rule of law and fight impunity. Prior to his appointment as UN Special Advisor, Dieng served as Assistant Secretary-General and Registrar of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda.

Dieng emphasized the need to learn from the past in order to prevent future mass atrocities and genocide. In the aftermath of the genocide in Rwanda, the catastrophic failure of the UN peacekeeping mission and the African Union to protect the Tutsis mobilized both organizations to critically reform. In 2004, on the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the genocide, then Secretary-General Kofi Annan established the position of UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide. The following year, Annan instituted the Responsibility to Protect (known as R2P), a global political commitment to prevent genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, which all UN member states endorsed.

According to Dieng, the past 25 years have witnessed “unprecedented efforts to prevent mass atrocities and to effectively prosecute them when they occur.” Progress toward accountability includes the establishment of a permanent international criminal court (the ICC) and international criminal tribunals in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia. Prosecuting and punishing perpetrators of atrocity crimes assures justice for victims and affirms that no one is above the law. When applied fairly and impartially, judicial processes contribute toward building sustainable peace while impunity results in denial and continued discrimination against communities at risk – factors that increase the risk of continued mass violence. Nonetheless, as Dieng acknowledged, atrocity crimes have continued to occur since 1994, including mass violence perpetrated against civilians in Syria and against the Rohingya in Myanmar, the precipitous rise of antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and the horrific treatment of refugees.

Early recognition, according to Dieng, could help to mitigate or prevent mass atrocities. By identifying the motives behind increased violence against a group, the state or the international community could develop strategies aimed at addressing and diffusing the underlying causes. However, as time passes, preemptive action becomes more difficult and costlier. If atrocity crimes are already



Adama Dieng

occurring, the available response options become more limited and much more complicated.

Intergroup relations based on identity and the impact of these relations on access to resources are often root causes for mass violence. “If we accept that atrocity crimes are processes,” he explained, “then it is possible to identify warning signs.” As UN Special Advisor, Dieng is responsible for alerting the Secretary-General and the United Nations Security Council when the risk of genocide or atrocity crimes rises anywhere around the world. The website for the UN Office on Genocide Prevention lists eight common risk factors that academics, lawyers, UN personnel, and practitioners in related fields have compiled, drawing upon lessons learned from the Holocaust and other past genocides. Further highlighting the importance of prevention, Dieng noted, “The Holocaust did not start with the gas chambers. It started with hate speech.” Education, focusing on hate speech and addressing ignorance, is essential to prevention strategies. Prevention is a collective responsibility and states must act to protect civilians when warning signs emerge. It is not enough to bring the perpetrators of atrocities to justice, he urged. “At the end of the day, we have to understand that it is better to prevent than to cure.”

*Alison Avery*





**FACULTY**

## TANER AKÇAM

Compiling the facts about the planning and execution of the Armenian Genocide has been the life work of historian Taner Akçam who holds the Robert Aram and Marianne Kaloosdian and Stephen and Marian Mugar Chair. His mission has been to prove, beyond doubt, that the Ottoman government was responsible for planning and conducting mass violence against its Christian populations. He is further committed to countering Turkish genocide denial by presenting original source materials that document the government's intent and organization of massacres carried out across the empire. Throughout his long career, Akçam has been the target of countless threats and intimidation. Thus, it is deeply gratifying for him to have received the heartfelt recognition of the Armenian community for his extensive scholarly contributions to the field on three separate occasions.

In September 2019, the Organization of Istanbul Armenians honored him with the inaugural Vahakn Dadrian, Genocide Scholarship award. This recognition was extraordinarily meaningful as Professor Dadrian, who passed away in August 2019, was a pioneer in researching the Armenian Genocide, and had been Akçam's close friend and mentor. Having received the first-ever Dadrian award, Akçam was then celebrated with a lifetime achievement award. The Knights and Daughters of Vartan gathered a packed auditorium for a gala event in October, under the auspices of His Grace Bishop Daniel Findikyan, Primate of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America (Eastern). Prominent scholars, politicians, philanthropists, and Armenian communal leaders acclaimed Akçam for his research, including his most recent book *Killing Orders – Talat Pasha's Telegrams and the Armenian Genocide* (2018).

The Armenian community bestowed yet another honor on Akçam in January on the occasion of the French publication of *Killing Orders*. At a dinner held in Paris, the Coordinating Council of Armenian Organizations in France presented him with a medal of courage for his groundbreaking research. French President Emmanuel Macron attended the event and extolled him in a speech that recognized his scholarship in proving "the scientific establishment of the clear intentionality of organized crime." Macron added, "You brought out what some wanted to plunge into oblivion, genocide denial. ... We don't build any great story on a lie, on the policy of revisionism or a negationism." In accepting the medal, Akçam used the occasion to highlight the relationship between continuing denial and the current politics of the Middle East. "Denialism is a struc-



Taner Akçam

ture, one that cannot simply be relegated to past atrocities. The denialist structure has produced and continues to nurture policies in the present." "For Turkish people to live in peace," he said, "the government must acknowledge the atrocities of its predecessor, the Ottoman empire. Turkey's denialist policies are a regional security threat, plain and simple."

As a scholar and an activist, Akçam consistently argues for an honest confrontation with the past. It was therefore essential for him to testify on behalf of a coalition of 25 human rights organizations for the passage of a bill that would mandate genocide education in Massachusetts schools. In testimony delivered at the state house, he argued that failures to acknowledge and teach about genocide has allowed violence to other people to continue. "We cannot claim human rights as a moral value only when convenient." He also highlighted the large presence of American missionaries who were working in the Armenian provinces of the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. In his view, the story of the missionaries' brave efforts to bring attention to the atrocities and to protect its victims is an integral part of United States history.

Ever mindful of the past, Akçam is constantly pondering how unresolved history impacts current politics. Thus, the protests against systemic racism in the US context were of great interest to him especially as the pandemic kept him tied to his home base. On the bright side, months of home confinement are sure to produce important new scholarship.

Mary Jane Rein

## ELIZABETH IMBER

Elizabeth Imber, newly appointed to the Michael and Lisa Leffell Chair in Modern Jewish History, is a talented historian with a passion for conducting serious archival research. Eager to train doctoral students who need these skills to become good historians, she is an ideal contributing faculty member at the Strassler Center. Concerned with the history of modern Jewish politics, Zionism, transnationalism, and imperialism, Imber is prepared to mentor PhD students with a range of interests. In her own work, these subjects are at the center of several projects. A historian who thinks about the intersections of modern Jewish history and European imperial history, Imber is committed to locating Jewish politics in domestic spaces, quotidian practices, and affective ties. She is also curious how our understanding of the modern Jewish experience changes when we shift and expand our geographic historiographic imagination to encompass spaces—including Africa and Asia—that are often treated as beyond the scope of Jewish history.

Imber's current book project, tentatively titled *Empire of Uncertainty: Jews, Zionism, and British Imperialism in the Age of Nationalism, 1917-1948*, is a continuation of her doctoral research at Johns Hopkins University. Her study explores how Jewish elites and leaders in three British imperial locales—Mandate Palestine, India, and South Africa—imagined and navigated Jewish political futures amidst a fast-shifting political landscape. Imber argues that the consideration and negotiation of the many possible fates of the British Empire—spanning from the persistence of imperial rule to the triumph of anticolonial political movements—were central to the ways both Zionists and non-Zionists imagined Jewish political futures. Expanding the periodization of her dissertation (1917 to 1939), her study becomes even richer and more complex. By ending in 1948, she concludes with a globally historic year that saw the founding of the modern state of Israel, the aftermath of partition in India and Pakistan, and the beginning of the apartheid regime in South Africa. A forthcoming Hebrew-language article, to appear in the journal *Israel*, gives a broad overview of the book project and introduces her work to Israeli readers.

Following her current book project, Imber will embark on two new initiatives. *Zionists in Transit: Global Journeys and the Making of Modern Jewish Politics* offers a political history of Zionism in the first half of the twentieth century through the lens of emissaries (*shlichim*) who represented the Zionist movement to communities around the world. The project investigates how less-thought-about



Elizabeth Imber

spaces—including ships, trains, hotels, and universities—functioned as cross-cultural settings in which Zionists interacted with a diverse range of Jews and non-Jews. Challenging and synthesizing both locally focused histories of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) and a developing literature on Jewish transnationalism, Imber aims to illuminate the many complicated ways in which the development of Zionism and the maturation of the Yishuv were part of a larger European and transnational story.

Drawn to stories with global scope, Imber next plans to write a history of the Anglo-Jewish Solomon family who dominated trade on the tiny British imperial island of St Helena. Known as the location for Napoleon's final imprisonment, St Helena was a vital way station in the South Atlantic for European ships heading to Asia before the construction of the Suez Canal. *The Forgotten Merchant King: Jews, Commerce, and Politics at the Crossroads of Empire* follows several generations of the Solomon family as they traversed the globe over the course of the long nineteenth century. Charting their travels and business interests, Imber also considers changing notions about imperial masculinity. After the pandemic, Imber hopes to make a research trip to the island, which until very recently was only accessible by mail ship from Cape Town.

Reflecting on her first year as Leffell Professor, Imber declares herself “extraordinarily lucky to be at a place that deeply values good teaching and research, with students who possess genuine intellectual curiosity and a wonderful desire to learn.” For a university of its size, she appreciates that Clark is unusually rich with colleagues who share her interests in modern Jewish history. She is also thrilled to be back in her home state of Massachusetts.

Mary Jane Rein

## THOMAS KÜHNE

In his capacity as director, Thomas Kühne continues to shape the future of the Strassler Center. During the 2019-20 academic year, his top priority was the search for the new Rose Professor in Holocaust Studies and Jewish History and Culture. Chairing the search committee, he was determined to attract an outstanding junior scholar for this core position. The extremely strong candidate pool testified to the growth of Holocaust studies and the international reputation of the Strassler Center. The unanimous choice of the committee, Frances Tanzer, then in the second year of a visiting appointment, enthusiastically agreed to join the faculty of Clark. Praising the potential of his new colleague, Kühne commented “Frances’ fascinating illumination of Jewish absence in post-Holocaust Vienna after 1945 pioneers the study of the aftermath of the Nazi genocide in Europe and will inspire the next generation of Holocaust scholars.”

Kühne embraces opportunities to contribute to Clark’s agenda of training students who tackle the challenges of a complex and rapidly changing world. Envisioning new areas of teaching and research, he secured support to expand faculty expertise on mass violence in the global south and to link the study of past human rights violations to efforts to prevent future violations. With funding for two three-year appointments, he looks forward to filling these positions in fall ’21: one focused on genocide studies and genocide prevention, the other on Holocaust pedagogy and the study of antisemitism. The latter position will become a permanent chair once the David P. Angel Professorship is established and it will have a lasting impact on generations of students.

Holder of the recently renamed Strassler Colin Flug Chair in Holocaust History, Kühne continues researching the mindsets of Holocaust perpetrators and published an essay on “The Holocaust and Masculinities” in a related volume. At the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, he organized a panel on “Holocaust and Law: The Legal Consciousness of Perpetrators,” together with Strassler Center alumni Alexis Herr PhD ’16 and Raz Segal PhD ’12.

Kühne has also been engaged with a project that places memories of the Holocaust into a comparative framework with memories of slavery and violence against Native Americans. This was the subject of a fascinating conference that he organized in spring 2019, *E Pluribus Unum? Memory Conflicts, Democracy, and Integration*, and now one of Kühne’s research projects. It will analyze how both countries



Thomas Kühne

have long privileged heroic national memories of past wars that rejuvenated the world of martial honor and suppressed the remembrance of minority experiences of racism, oppression and terror that resulted from slavery, genocide and antisemitism. After 1945, Germany reinvented itself as a pacifist nation deeply ashamed of its genocidal past. By contrast, the United States has experienced an increasingly contentious memory culture, divided between those who glorify martial and racist traditions and those with an impulse to acknowledge past crimes. In November, Kühne was invited to present his research at Vanderbilt University in a lecture on “Shame, Honor, and Amusement. Violent Pasts in Germany and in America.”

Kühne is a dedicated mentor to his PhD advisees. His former student Kim Allar ’19 graduated in spring last year with an innovative dissertation on the training of camp guards. Jason Tingle ’19 followed suit in summer with a dissertation on the social dynamics of the persecution and murder of the Jewish population of Chelm, Poland that, once published, will disrupt ideas about how the Holocaust unfolded in this region. Much to their advisor’s delight, both graduates quickly secured academic positions, despite the difficulties of a tense job market.

Teaching graduates and undergraduates remains another passion for Kühne. His advanced seminar, “Collective Memory and Mass Violence,” has long been popular among Clarkies. This year, students praised the range of “eye-opening” insights they gained even after the class moved online due to the pandemic. In their assessments, students called him “a must-have professor” and a “wonderful example for how faculty can play an important role in navigating difficult times.”

Mary Jane Rein

## KEN MACLEAN

Ken MacLean, a professor in the Department of International Development and Social Change, brings important practical knowledge and considerable scholarship about human rights to the research and teaching agenda of the Strassler Center. An anthropologist, MacLean has worked throughout Southeast Asia, but he has developed an especially deep focus on ethnic conflict in Burma/Myanmar. With more than two decades of experience working with NGOs on issues related to human rights violations, conflict-induced displacement, state-sponsored violence, extractive industries, and territorial disputes across Southeast Asia, his perspective is essential to students eager to make connections between learning and activism. In addition to participating as a core faculty member at the Strassler Center, he serves as Director of Asian Studies.

Expanding human rights studies at the Strassler Center will strengthen knowledge about individual genocides and contribute to scholarship that illuminates similarities and differences between various cases. This approach is consistent with thematic developments in higher education, which have increasingly incorporated the study of human rights into Holocaust and genocide teaching. MacLean has developed coursework that advances human rights scholarship at Clark. His courses inspire students from many disciplines and include *Visualizing Human Rights: Advocacy, Action, and the Politics of Representation* and *Seeing Like a Humanitarian Agency*. With his extensive experience working with NGOs, he is well-prepared to mentor students who hope to expand their horizon to include activities that bring about positive change in conflict regions around the world.

MacLean's scholarship on conflicts in Burma/Myanmar includes the current genocidal violence against the Rohingya minority. In summer 2019, MacLean participated in the 14th conference of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, held in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where he presented a paper entitled, "The Rohingya Crisis: Forensic Practices and the Politics of Proof." His book project, *Crimes in Archival Form: Human Rights Fact Production and Myanmar*, will be published with the University of California Press and explores how fact-finders in conflict areas document human rights violations. In addition, MacLean contributed "Dangerous Speech Cloaked in Saffron Robes: Race, Religion, and Anti-Muslim Violence in Myanmar," co-authored with Nicky Diamond, to the forthcoming volume, *Handbook on Religion and Genocide* (edited by Stephen Smith and Sara Brown, PhD '16). His journal article, "Historicizing the Archive: Rethinking the Mechanics of Mass Murder in Indonesia," is forthcoming in *Bijdragen tot de Taal-, land- en Volkenkunde (Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia)*. He is also currently at work on a chapter that focuses on the plight of the Rohingya that is to be published in *Centuries of Genocide* edited by Samuel Totten. Lastly, MacLean served as the panel discussant for "Genealogies of Violence in Burma: Incorporating the Rohingya Genocide into Analysis of Burma's Protracted Civil War," at the



Ken MacLean

Association of Asian Studies Annual Conference in 2020.

MacLean is committed to documenting and highlighting current genocidal crimes in other regions as well. In fall 2019, he organized a panel discussion examining the violence perpetrated by the Syrian regime against its citizens, titled "Documenting Mass Crimes and Envisioning Justice for Syrians." During spring 2020, MacLean had planned to host a speaker to discuss the cultural genocide that the Chinese government is conducting against the Uyghurs, a Muslim minority in China. Unfortunately, the event was canceled due to the coronavirus pandemic and the closure of all in-person events.

A dedicated doctoral advisor, MacLean oversees dissertation projects on Rwanda as well as the 1971 Genocide in Bangladesh. According to his doctoral student Sajjad Rahman, who is writing a dissertation on the latter event, "It is a privilege to be an advisee of Professor MacLean. Not only does he encourage me to work autonomously but he provides guidance and support. But what I admire most is his sensitivity and understanding regarding the challenges I faced during different phases of my research."

Hannah Garelick '21

## FRANCES TANZER



Frances Tanzer

Frances Tanzer never knew her great-grandmother, but grew up hearing stories about her path out of Europe during the interwar period.

Fascinated by the past — including her own family history — she went on to study history and visual studies at the University of Toronto. There, she took a class that opened her eyes to the use of primary sources, including diaries and first-person testimonials, as tools for studying historical events. Tanzer was also interested in how people — particularly artists and performers — reinvent themselves when they're forced to move.

"I think these things got lodged into my brain and made me interested in refugee experiences," she says.

Tanzer, newly appointed as the Rose Professor of Holocaust Studies and Modern Jewish History and Culture, taught at the University as a visiting professor for two years before her appointment to hold the Rose chair in August 2020. She earned her master's degree and Ph.D. in history from Brown University under the direction of Professor Omer Bartov.

"It's kind of a continuation of what I've been doing," she says. "I teach classes about the Holocaust that focus on Jewish sources."

During the spring 2020 semester, Tanzer taught the history of the Holocaust, much of it through the lens of how young adults experienced the genocide. She also offered a seminar on borderland histories — in particular, those involving a contested border. The class covered East-Central Europe, South Asia, the Middle East, Israel-Palestine, and concluded with the U.S.-Mexico border.

In those classes and in all of her teaching, Tanzer hopes students will examine the case studies and develop new ways of thinking about ongoing controversies.

"What I try to do in my classes is help students better understand contemporary issues, to understand their historical roots, and to think about them and analyze them in more nuanced ways," she says.

When the COVID-19 pandemic took hold, Tanzer asked students in her Holocaust history class to archive the crisis by compiling news reports, social media posts, and their own observations.

"One of the more general themes of our class is to learn about different source materials and source types, which is something you can transfer to any history course or regular life," she says. "I'm certainly not having students compare the Holocaust to the pandemic, but I want them to think about this as a moment when people are living through something quite extraordinary that surpasses what was thinkable or imaginable before it took place."

The exercise helped students view the pandemic through a historical lens and gave them a space to reflect upon and analyze their own experiences. Several students moved back home across the country or overseas — to Taiwan, Switzerland, and China. Tanzer found the diversity of their perspectives and level of engagement quite striking.

In fall 2020, Tanzer taught a course on refugee history where she aimed to establish a forum for students to share what they're learning with a broader audience. She is also working on several personal projects, including *Vanishing Vienna* — a book that explores representations of Jewish absence in post-Nazi Vienna and Austria — and *Klezmer Dynasty*, about Tanzer's own family history in East-Central Europe.

Aviva Luttrell

(adapted from *Clark Now*, 7 April 2020)

## SHELLY TENENBAUM

Several years ago, Shelly Tenenbaum, Coordinator of Undergraduate Activities at the Strassler Center, reached out to the director of the Boston University Prison Education Program and offered to teach a comparative genocide course behind prison walls.

“When the United States has the highest incarceration rate in the world, with over two million Americans behind bars, how can we not care about the people who are locked up?” she asks. “I thought teaching in a college program in prison was a small contribution I could make.”

Tenenbaum was anxious the first day she entered MCI-Norfolk, a state prison located about 45 minutes east of Worcester. The long list of rules and procedures regarding acceptable clothing and behavior, in addition to the extended entry/screening process, was daunting. “But when I got to the classroom, I was totally comfortable,” she recalls. “It felt like any other classroom.”

During the 2019-20 academic year, she partnered with the Emerson Prison Initiative, modeled after the highly successful Bard Prison Initiative in New York, and moved her teaching locale to the Concord prison. Her students, ranging in age from their twenties to late fifties, display “a confidence in their ideas,” she says. “They ask challenging questions, and when they disagree with each other, or me, it makes for an exciting intellectual environment. The ideas they explore in their classes give them a framework for understanding their own lives, but also for grappling with complexity — with the gray zones.”

Samantha Lakin, a Strassler Center Ph.D. candidate with deep expertise in the genocide in Rwanda, last year worked as Tenenbaum’s teaching assistant during her time in the prison program. Years ago, Lakin taught in New Orleans through the Teach for America program and today she’s a research fellow at Harvard Law School and has been an active public speaker on issues of education justice.

“We discuss hard subjects,” she says of the genocide course. “A lot of the students didn’t like the nature of some of the course content, and I don’t blame them — genocide is gruesome. They’d say, ‘My life is disturbing enough.’ My challenge was to communicate to them and push back at them about why this topic is important.”

Claude Kataire ’05, who survived the genocide in Rwanda and who now teaches with the Facing History and Ourselves organization, also has assisted Tenenbaum inside the classroom. “When they hear about my experience, the usual reaction is one of shock,” he says. “But in my more than two decades involved with genocide education, I’ve found prison students eager to learn more once they



Shelly Tenenbaum

realize they know a survivor.”

Shelly Tenenbaum maintains a rare perspective on humans’ ability to persevere through despair. Her parents survived the Holocaust death camps and found each other while searching for missing family members in the Polish city of Krakow. Their experiences have inspired her to research and teach about the human capacity for brutality — lessons she imparts to men who have been brutal, and who have been brutalized.

“The genocide course raises tough questions in any context, but maybe even more so in a prison classroom,” she asserts. “We talk about how ordinary men commit murder; we talk about dehumanization in Auschwitz. The students have had powerful responses to readings by Elie Wiesel, Terrence Des Pres, and Tadeusz Borowski, readings that gave some of them nightmares. When they’ve written their autobiographies, childhood trauma, violence, racism, and deep remorse toward their victims and their victims’ families as well as towards their own families often surfaces.

“I am not by nature a hopeful person and am skeptical of triumphalist narratives,” Tenenbaum continues. “But my students in prison have taught me to believe in the capacity for transformation.”

*Jim Keogh*

*(abridged from Clark Magazine spring/summer 2020)*

## FACULTY

## PROGRAM FACULTY

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

**Taner Akçam, PhD**, History Department  
Kaloosdian Mugar Professor of Armenian Genocide Studies and  
Modern Armenian History

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

**Debórah Dwork, PhD**, History Department  
Senior Research Scholar  
Founding Director and Inaugural Rose Professor of Holocaust  
History

**Anita Fábos, PhD**, Department of International Development,  
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Social Change

**Everett Fox, PhD**, Department of Language, Literature and  
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Director, Jewish Studies Concentration  
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**Elizabeth Imber, PhD**, History Department  
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**Benjamin Korstvedt, PhD**, Department of Visual  
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**Thomas Kühne, PhD**, History Department  
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**Ora Szekely, PhD**, Political Science Department  
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**Frances Tanzer, PhD**, History Department  
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**Robert Tobin, PhD**, Department of Language,  
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Henry J. Leir Professor in Foreign Languages and Cultures

**Johanna Ray Vollhardt, PhD**, Francis L. Hiatt School  
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**Kristen Williams, PhD**, Political Science Department  
Professor of Political Science





**STUDENT  
NEWS**

## GRADUATE STUDENT NEWS

The move into the Colin-Flug Graduate Study wing proved expedient for the Strassler Center's PhD students when the Covid-19 pandemic suddenly disrupted the spring semester. The offices in the new wing afforded plenty of space to social distance for those students unable to conduct their research and studies from home. Students were able to manage their dissertation prospectus defenses remotely from their offices or in the Rose Library where technological upgrades were possible thanks to the construction of the new book annex. Plans for summer travel to archives, participation in intense language training programs, and research trips to conduct oral interviews were all put on hold. Under these circumstances, the doctoral cohort in residence for academic year 2019-20 revised their workplans and mostly remained on campus. They were grateful for air-conditioned offices, stable internet connections, and access to the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive and the Yale University Library Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies. Despite the challenges, the students advanced their doctoral projects as they adapted their research plans to take advantage of the resources available to them. They secured competitive fellowships, published new scholarship, and reorganized conference plans and research trips. Their achievements are described here.

Tapper Fellow **Maayan Armelin**, recipient of a Nyman Research award, examines the social relations and operational structures of the SS-Einsatzgruppen (EG). These mobile killing squads followed the German army during the Nazi offensive on the Soviet Union and murdered over a million and a half civilians in the margins of cities, local fortresses, forests, and fields. Armelin studies the leadership styles EG officers practiced, and analyzes how particular social hierarchies, comradeship, and cohesion enhanced EG members' apparent willingness to perpetrate mass murder.

Armelin's project integrates historical and social science perspectives to understand the organizational culture and customs of the EG. Her project builds upon scholarship that has established the histories, routes, and crimes of the EG and debates whether an order to kill Jews indiscriminately was ever given. Combining social psychological concepts such as social identity theory, inter-group relations, leadership, and conformity, Armelin analyzes testimonies of former Einsatzgruppen members given in postwar Germany and Austria. She explains how crucial patterns of leadership and peer relations encouraged individual Einsatzgruppen members to engage in mass violence.

Having collected extensive documentation from the German national and state archives in Ludwigsburg, Koblenz, Munich, and Wiesbaden, Armelin investigates how vertical and horizontal social relations, contributed to the enormity of their crimes. She analyzes three EG units: Sonderkommando 7a, led by three officers during a short period of time, Karl Jäger's Einsatzkommando 3 which orchestrated the annihilation of Lithuanian Jews, and Einsatzkommando 12 whose multiple sub-units massacred thousands in present day Romania and Ukraine. Former members of these units testified in postwar trials and legal proceedings conducted by allied tribunals and West German courts. Their testimonies provide valuable demographic data and document attitudes and policies, alongside descriptions of particular institutional traditions and customs. Armelin also examines documents produced by Nazi Germany such as the Einsatzgruppen Operational Situational Reports which detail the activities and killing rates of the units at specific loca-

tions and times and SS personal files that document the career paths of EG officers.

Examining Sonderkommando (SK) 7a, Armelin confirms that the unit's officers differed in how they related to their men and assignments. Some accommodated requests for reassignments and even avoided leading executions, while others initiated more executions than ordered and forced every member to shoot victims. Reviewing the literature on German military strategy, Armelin found that the EG, like the German army, abided to the tradition of *Auftragstaktik* (mission command), which granted autonomy to officers and promoted them based on proven results. The testimonies pertaining to SK 7a demonstrate that the *Auftragstaktik* reward system cascaded down to the lowest ranking officers and contributed to their brutality. Comparing the social relations and leadership styles of Einsatzkommando 3 and Einsatzkommando 12, Armelin traces patterns in unit members' contributions to mass crimes in various locations and points of time. Awarded a junior fellowship from the Simon Wiesenthal Institute, Armelin relocated to Vienna in fall to utilize the Institute's resources to explore postwar trials and legal procedures relevant to the three EG units conducted by Austrian authorities and courts.

Third year PhD student **Alison Avery** held a Tapper Fellowship during academic year 2019-20. She researches the roots and drivers of genocide, focusing on Rwanda and the Great Lakes Region of Africa for her dissertation project. Using the 'Interahamwe' militia in Rwanda as a case study, she explores how militias are formed and used in genocide. Specifically, Avery examines the micro-dynamics that shaped the formation, organization, and evolution of the Interahamwe militia as well as the mindset of the perpetrators who participated in their murderous activities. While several previous studies have examined perpetrators' actions during the genocide, existing literature has rarely studied the Interahamwe itself. Moreover, previous works have often understated the fundamental role the Interahamwe played in organizing and planning the genocide in the years leading up to 1994.



Alison Avery

The aim of Avery's dissertation is to fill this critical knowledge gap. She aims to contribute new insights and historical analysis of the recruitment, grooming, and mobilization of the Interahamwe militia, as well as their participation during the genocide. Through a combination of archival data and open-ended interviews with former perpetrators, as well as friends and family of former Interahamwe members, Avery's research will expand our historical understanding of the preparation and execution of the genocide. Moreover, her findings have the potential to aid in genocide prevention by identifying patterns of genocidal recruitment and preparation as early warning indicators of genocide.

Avery's project seeks to provide policymakers and practitioners with new insight into how genocide ideology develops and evolves within militias. Following the 1994 Genocide, most Interahamwe members fled to refugee camps in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo, where they regrouped, rearmed, and subsequently joined the ranks of various Hutu militias operating within the highly complex, fraught, and lawless landscape in Eastern Congo. Laying bare the history, organization, and mobilization strategies of the Interahamwe, Avery's research will address how violence was organized and carried out in Rwanda. In addition, her study will consider the broader problem of regional instability due to armed militias in the Great Lakes Region. Avery's findings can help us to rethink our understanding of group perpetrator violence in genocide studies writ large.

In spring, Avery proceeded on schedule with her comprehensive exams and the defense of her dissertation prospectus. Having successfully navigated these milestone achievements, she turned to full-time research. She began by examining archival documents from the UN International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR) online archival database, as well as perpetrator video testimonies accessed through the Kigali Genocide Memorial archive. In the ICTR archives, Avery will explore both the evolution of the Interahamwe militia and the mindset of Interahamwe perpetrators



Daan deLeeuw

through the trial transcripts of elite-level Interahamwe members as well as trial witnesses who were former Interahamwe members. As the Clark University Institutional Review Board has temporarily suspended all human subjects research, Avery plans to continue archival document review until she can begin her field interviews in Rwanda.

Claims Conference Fellow **Daan de Leeuw** enjoyed the support of a Shahun Parish research award for his dissertation project on Dutch Jewish slave laborers during the second half of World War II. His dissertation, *The Geography of Slave Labor: Dutch Jews and the Third Reich, 1942-1945*, examines how the passage of these prisoners through the concentration camp system affected their social structure. Using geovisualisations that allow for more interactive maps, he studies patterns in the movement of individual prisoners and groups of prisoners through space and time that can elucidate the impact of relocations.

Nazi administrative records and survivor testimonies document the movement of Jewish slave laborers from camp to camp. Yet historians have not examined what these relocations meant for the prisoners. Forced transfers signified more than a transport from one camp to the next. For the prisoners, these relocations proved disruptive because the transports came without warning, violence accompanied the transit process, and prisoners did not know their destination. These disruptions wreaked havoc, too, because each time the prisoners entered another unknown camp universe with its own structure, hierarchy, and rules, they struggled to find their position in the inmate hierarchy. Relocation shattered the prisoners' networks and social structure as it affected the bonds that prisoners created among themselves.

De Leeuw applies spatial analysis to the slave laborers' trajectories to research groups of Jewish slave laborers and the biographies of individuals within these groups. Beginning with the deportation of Jews from the Westerbork transit camp and Vught concentration

camp in the Netherlands, de Leeuw follows them to concentration camps under German command and beyond the Dutch borders. He will map their routes, aggregating the data with the individuals' postwar testimonies. He has created a database with information based on the International Tracing Service records of approximately 150 Jews deported from the Netherlands whose testimonies are held by NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies, and the USC Shoah Foundation.

During winter, de Leeuw studied the early postwar testimonies in the NIOD archive in Amsterdam. Survivor testimonies demonstrate that, upon deportation from the Netherlands, many Jews followed diverse routes through the concentration camp system. After selection for slave labor, some stayed in these camps for a time while others were deported to other sites within a few days. The sources suggest that nationality was key to group formation, which continued when Dutch Jews met each other or gentile Dutch people after further deportations. The testimonies also show that once selections and relocations had scattered the initial clusters, other features determined group membership and belonging: language, gender, previously shared camp experiences, and work assignments.

In spring, de Leeuw passed his oral comprehensive exams with distinction and defended his dissertation prospectus using a virtual format. Due to the pandemic, de Leeuw remained on campus, taking advantage of the Strassler Center's access to the USC Shoah testimonies. Looking to travel again in fall, he applied to present a paper at the November conference *Deportations in the Nazi Era – Sources and Research* organized by the Arolsen Archives – Center for Nazi Persecution. He was pleased to contribute, in collaboration with his former colleagues, to an edited volume (published in Dutch) on the history of the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies.

**Burçin Gerçek** held the Agnes Manoogian Hausrath Fellowship during her fourth year of doctoral study. She was also the first student to receive the Asbed B. and Margaret M. Zakarian award in support of her research on the Armenian Genocide. Long interested in Turkish-Armenian issues and with a background in political science, she worked as a journalist before beginning her PhD. Between 2002-2016, she served as Istanbul correspondent, for the French newspapers *L'Express* and *Ouest France*. She also wrote for the online magazine *Repair*.

Until the pandemic restrictions came into effect, Gerçek spent the academic year in Paris conducting archival research for her dissertation. She studied survivor testimonies and newspapers in the collections of the Nubarian Library and reports from the consul's diplomatic representatives held at the French Diplomacy Archive in Nantes. During quarantine, Gerçek continued to study the documents she had collected. She also took advantage of an Armenian language course that the Hrant Dink Foundation offered online that helped to advance her research on testimonies written in Armenian.

For her dissertation, Gerçek explores the mindset of Armenian genocide perpetrators in the Ankara Province. A plethora of diverse



(left to right) Alexandra Kramen, Stefan Ionescu PhD '13, Jessa Sinnott, Hana Green, and Simon Goldberg

accounts from various districts of the province shed light on the dynamics of the violence. They include memoirs, newspaper interviews and articles, oral and written trial depositions that come from bystanders, observers, and righteous figures. Gerçek recently discovered the unstudied memoirs of Emin Bey, one of the middle rank perpetrators from Ankara Province. While some perpetrator memoirs are already well known, it is rare to find ones that admit to crimes. Emin Bey detailed his role in organizing the deportation of Armenians and the confiscation of their properties. His memoirs are unique for their expression of remorse although he is also quick to justify his actions. While Emin Bey displays envy and resentment toward the Armenian traders who worked with his father, it is interesting to note that his father did not share his anti-Armenian sentiment. This distinction demonstrates a shift and a generational difference in shaping perception and ideology.

Emin Bey's memoirs depict the process of his radicalization. His familiarization with the policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), the governing party before and during the Armenian genocide, is not due to formal ideological training. Rather, informal relations and personal contacts play a more important role in exposing Emin Bey to nationalistic and anti-Armenian discourse. Gerçek also collected information on the role that paramilitary

youth organizations of the CUP played in the ideological training of perpetrators. While the role of Nazi and non-German fascist youth organizations in shaping the mindset of perpetrators is an important part of Holocaust scholarship, the topic remains largely understudied in the literature on the Armenian genocide.

Shirley and Ralph Rose Fellow **Simon Goldberg**, recipient of the Samuel and Anna Jacobs research award, examines documents fashioned in the Kovno (Kaunas) ghetto in Lithuania to explore the broader question of how wartime Jewish elites portrayed life in the ghetto. The texts that survived the war years in Kovno offer rich insights into ghetto life: they include an anonymous history written by Jewish policemen; a report written by members of the ghetto *khevre kedishe* (burial society); and a protocol book detailing the *Ältestenrat's* wartime deliberations. Yet these documents primarily reflect the perspectives of a select few. Indeed, for decades, scholarship on the Holocaust in Kovno has been dominated by the writings of ghetto elites, relegating the testimonies of Jews who did not occupy positions of authority during the war to the margins. Goldberg's dissertation explores how little-known accounts of the Kovno ghetto both challenge and broaden our understanding of wartime Jewish experience.

Goldberg has spent the last year conducting research for his dissertation. As the 2018-2019 Fellow in Baltic Jewish History at the YIVO Institute for Jewish Research in New York, Goldberg studied the early historiography of the Kovno ghetto as reflected in the various newspapers and periodicals published in DP camps in Germany and Italy, including *Unzer Weg* and *Ba'Derech*. He also explored the papers held in YIVO's "Territorial Collection: Baltic Countries" that relate to the events of the Holocaust in Lithuania. His fellowship concluded with his Max Weinreich Fellowship Lecture, "Reimagining the History of the Kovno Ghetto," which highlighted Yiddish and Hebrew accounts of the Kovno ghetto whose evidentiary value has been minimized or ignored.

Fall 2019 presented opportunities for professional and academic development. It began with a presentation of Goldberg's dissertation research at the Weiner Library in London as part of the "PhD and a Cup of Tea" series. He also spoke at the Special Lessons & Legacies Conference held in Munich, the first ever such gathering to take place in Europe. In December, Goldberg delivered a paper entitled, "Reading the History of Jewish Policemen in the Kovno Ghetto: Threads, Traces, and New Interpretations" at the Association for Jewish Studies Annual Conference in San Diego.

Goldberg is currently in residence at the USHMM's Mandel Center as the 2019-2020 Fund for the Study of the Holocaust in Lithuania Visiting Fellow. At the Museum, Goldberg draws on a wide range of records from the Central States Archives of Lithuania (LCVA). LCVA's vast repository includes protocols, daily reports, arrest records, and meeting minutes that shed light on the institution of the Jewish police in the Kovno ghetto and the chronicle its members wrote in 1942 and 1943. A doctoral scholarship from the Memorial Foundation for Jewish Culture will support Goldberg's research for



Hana Green

the 2020-21 academic year. This award aims to help individuals preparing for careers that specialize in Jewish scholarship and research.

**Hana Green**, a Claims Conference Fellow and recipient of the Hilda and Al Kirsch Research award for academic year 2019-20, explores how identity compositions shaped the experiences and survival of Jewish women during the Holocaust. Her doctoral project lies at the intersections of gender, identity, sexuality and resistance. Specifically, she considers the deeper implications of what it meant to "pass" as Aryan. Her research explores the ways in which Jewish women navigated survival on a day-to-day basis, "passing" in various regions and settings across German-speaking Europe, primarily Germany and Austria. She hopes to underscore the breadth and variation of experiences and to highlight "passing" as a distinctive mechanism of survival. Principally, the project will examine how the ability to adopt and navigate a malleable identity shapes experience and survival.

Green conducted extensive archival research and worked with both written and oral testimony as an MA student at the University of Haifa. She utilized the libraries and archives in Israel such as the Ghetto Fighters' House Museum and Yad Vashem to research her MA project, "The Role of Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Analyzed through the Lens of Jewish Women in Partisan Brigades, Hid-

ing and ‘Passing’ as Aryan during the Holocaust.” She has examined oral histories in the USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive and conducted research at the USHMM where she was able to collect written testimonies and incorporate several unpublished works into her body of research. In addition to working through the materials she collected, she will continue her research at the USHMM with funding from the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute.

Last September, Green presented “Whose Stories Do We Commemorate and Teach? Passing as a Distinct Category of Survival During the Holocaust” at an academic conference hosted by the University of Richmond, *The Future of Holocaust Memory: A Global Consideration of Holocaust Commemoration Held in the American South*. She presented on a panel concerning the future of Holocaust narrative and pedagogy. While at the conference, Green also lectured about Holocaust memory in the United States at the University of Richmond. The conference presented the opportunity to meet with diverse scholars and graduate students who provided positive feedback on her paper and dissertation work. Green, along with several other conference presenters, has been invited to adapt her lecture into an article for a special issue of *The Journal of Holocaust Research* slated for late 2021.

The pandemic forced Green to rethink her research schedule. She had planned a two-week research visit to the USHMM to collect primary source material. In addition, she was committed to improving her German language skills at the Middlebury summer language program. Pivoting from those plans, she decided to stay on campus and enrolled in an online language course. She also worked through testimonies in the Fortunoff Video Archive cache, now accessible directly at the Strassler Center. With her research delayed, she focused on preparing for her comprehensive exams and writing fellowship applications.

Mildred Suesser Fellow **Ellen Johnson** studies the effects of ghettoization on Jewish intergroup relations. Given her research focus on the Łódź ghetto, she was honored to be the first recipient of the Hannah and Roman Kent research award as Roman was born and raised in Łódź and was a survivor of its ghetto. Johnson earned a BA in History from Transylvania University (Kentucky), where her senior thesis investigated survival patterns among Jewish children in Auschwitz. Her MA thesis in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Kean University (New Jersey) examined the ideological development of George Lincoln Rockwell’s American Nazi Party in the 1960s. This project demonstrated Rockwell’s influence on contemporary white nationalist and neo-Nazi organizations. The rise in antisemitic incidents in the United States inspired her to consider how Rockwell popularized Holocaust denial and linked antisemitic and racist rhetoric.

Johnson participated in the Leo Baeck Institute’s Summer University in Advanced Jewish Studies in 2017 and that experience has shaped her interest in Jewish identity politics within the Nazi ghetto and camp systems. For that program, she researched the relationship between German Jews and Eastern European Jews in



Johnson

Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp. Thanks to an introduction from Dr. Astrid Ley, archivist at the Sachsenhausen Museum, Johnson was able to interview the last Sachsenhausen survivor still living in Berlin. Johnson plans to conduct similar research for her dissertation exploring the transformation of spaces, Jewish identities, and intergroup relations within the Riga and Łódź ghettos. Johnson chose these case studies as the largest number of Jews from Germany, Austria, Switzerland, and Czechoslovakia who were deported to ghettos in Eastern Europe were sent there. As a result, there was significant intergroup interaction between German- and Yiddish-speaking Jews in Riga and Łódź, but the outcomes of this contact varied significantly between the two ghettos.

In her dissertation, Johnson will analyze how prewar perceptions and local conditions in the ghettos informed how Jewish groups interacted. Given the need to work with survivor testimonies, she has committed herself to improving her language skills. Prior to beginning her doctoral studies, Johnson participated in the German Language School at Middlebury College for which she received the Kathryn Davis Fellowship for Peace. In summer 2019, Johnson attended the Naomi Prawer Kadar International Yiddish Summer Program. As a result of Covid interruptions, Johnson virtually

attended YIVO's Uriel Weinreich Summer Yiddish Program. She looks forward to resuming archival research following her oral comprehensive exams and dissertation prospectus defense.

**Emil Kjerte** holds the Louis and Ann Kulin Fellowship, which aims to advance scholarly cooperation with Scandinavia and Denmark in particular. He earned a BA in history from the University of Copenhagen and an MA in Holocaust and Genocide Studies from Uppsala University in Sweden. Kjerte's dissertation focuses on camp personnel in Jasenovac, the largest concentration camp in the fascist Independent State of Croatia. The Ustaša was one of the few regimes that organized and ran concentration camps independent of the Nazis. Compared to the rich and nuanced historiography on German perpetrators of the Holocaust, the perpetrators who implemented the destructive policies of this regime remain far less explored. By examining the men and women who worked in the Jasenovac concentration camp, Kjerte's dissertation addresses this gap.

Kjerte explores the lifepaths and prior careers of the camp personnel, their activities in Jasenovac, and their postwar trajectories. In addition to the group dynamics and sense of community among the guards, he also considers the conflicts between them. Interested in the guards' general conduct towards the prisoners and inspired by micro-sociological approaches, Kjerte considers the situational dynamics of perpetrator-prisoner interactions within Jasenovac and analyzes the situations that tended to generate or amplify physical violence. While brutality was integral to the perpetrators' activities, his research explores whether some guards were less cruel when not under the watchful eyes of peers and superiors.

Kjerte found survivor testimonies that offer insights into the Jasenovac perpetrators including variations in the ideological commitment of the guards serving in the camp complex. While some were dedicated zealots, others seemed oblivious to even basic tenets of the Ustaša ideology. At the same time, survivor testimonies reveal that many of the guards struggled to reconcile their religious faith with their crimes. Kjerte's research suggests that such spiritual anxiety demonstrates an awareness that the crimes perpetrated in Jasenovac constituted a radical transgression of the ethical imperatives of Christianity, which were firmly entrenched in Croatian society.

In summer, Kjerte was able to resume his archival research in Zagreb. A travel and research grant from the Central European History Society supported research trips throughout Croatia. In the town of Zadar, he reviewed legal cases pertaining to the concentration camps that the Ustaša regime established on the island of Pag during summer 1941. While these camps were only in operation for a few months, most of the officers who administrated them also served at Jasenovac, where they committed further violence.

At the Jasenovac Memorial Museum, Kjerte gained access to the museum's large collection of photographs. Additionally, he reviewed reports and primary sources relating to the camp complex. Amid the reports are materials that document acts perpetrated against



Hana Green, Casey Bush '18 MA '19, Ellen Johnson, Jessa Sinnott, Samantha Lakin, Daan deLeeuw, Alexandra Kramen, Ani Garabed Ohanian

Croat peasants from the environs of Jasenovac. Kjerte argues that crimes against civilians highlight the general devaluation of life that prevailed among the camp personnel and a growing mistrust stemming from partisan activities in the area. At the Croatian State Archive in Zagreb, Kjerte studied letters written in 1944 by members of a communist prisoner cell within the subcamp of Stara Gradiška. While the content mainly pertains to issues with maintaining solidarity among the prisoners and ensuring that packets from the outside world were shared equally, the letters also shed light on specific crimes and perpetrators. Some of the descriptions include astonishing details that highlight the value of documents written by victims.

Having received a fellowship from the USHMM, Kjerte will commence his residency in early 2021. Until then, he continues his research in Croatia with the support of a Sharon Abramson Research Grant from the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University.

Claims Conference fellow **Alexandra Kramen** holds the Marlene and David Persky research award for her dissertation project. She explores how Jewish survivors living in Föhrenwald, the lon-



Alexandra Kramen

gest-running Jewish DP camp in postwar Europe, conceived of and acted upon justice for the harms they and their loved ones suffered during the Holocaust. In that process, they often defied conventional legal norms and conceptions about revenge. Föhrenwald offers the opportunity to investigate how Jewish DPs reimagined symbolic revenge in postwar Germany. Her research explores how ideas and actions regarding justice evolved over time in response to shifting political, social, and economic conditions.

Kramen elucidates an area of Jewish life during and after the Holocaust that has received scant attention, offering a new perspective on how Jews coped with the trauma they experienced under the Nazi regime. Her project also aims to contribute more broadly to the study of transitional justice processes in the wake of mass violence. Examining how interactions with various international, regional, and local forces shaped the lives of Jewish DPs in Föhrenwald she highlights mechanisms outside of the international criminal tribunal system that serve to restore a sense of justice for survivors of

mass violence.

Kramen continues to analyze the Yiddish newspapers she gathered during her time as a 2018 Summer Graduate Student Research Fellow at the USHMM. She is reviewing survivor testimonies related to the camp in the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive and the Fortunoff Video Archive. In spring 2020, Kramen passed her oral comprehensive exams with distinction and defended her dissertation prospectus. She has recently received extraordinary support to continue researching her project, including a 2020 Junior Fellowship for research at the Center for Holocaust Studies at the Institute for Contemporary History in Munich, the 2020 David Baumgardt Memorial Fellowship for research at the Leo Baeck Institute-New York, and the 2020 Fred and Ellen Lewis Fellowship for research at the JDC Archives in New York. Her year of research will also include a visit to the Yad Vashem archives.

**Ani Garabed Ohanian** is the recipient of a fellowship underwritten by a generous group of funders including the Nishan and Margrit Atinjian Family Foundation, Michelle Kolligian, Steven and Deborah Migridichian, and Harry and Hripsime Parsekian. Her dissertation project, *Perpetuation of Atrocity and the Armenian Genocide's Influence within Bolshevik, Kemalist, and Armenian Relations*, examines Bolshevik-Kemalist relations as they pertain to the Armenian Genocide, a topic that has not received major scholarly treatment. Many works, especially those in Turkish, analyze these interactions from a geopolitical perspective, but they often marginalize or gloss over the role of genocide or the emergence of independent Armenian, Azerbaijani, and Georgian nation-states. Ohanian seeks to highlight new perspectives that cast Bolshevik movements in the Caucasus in a different light. Although political aspirations, ideological convictions, and foreign diplomacy express motivations for conquest and underlie several military operations, concrete historical events such as the genocide and the subsequent perpetuation of atrocity and destruction permit for a more profound analysis of the nature of Bolshevik and Kemalist interactions.

Ohanian explores the triangular relationship that arose in the aftermath of World War I between Turkey, Russia, and the Caucasus. She highlights the effects of imperial decline and the rise of nationalist ambition. Similar to East Europe, the Near East saw the continuation of war until 1923. Violence stemmed from ethnic nationalistic fervor, mainly on behalf of minorities, and ideological fanaticism that advanced revolutionary aims. Ohanian seeks to understand the role that genocide played in the shifting alliances and dynamics of imperial decline in the Caucasus.

Ohanian received the Kathryn Davis Fellowship to study Russian at Middlebury College during summer 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the language program did not take place. Instead, she received a grant from Middlebury College to participate in their virtual Russian program. Having improved her Russian skills, she looks forward to primary source research. The American Council's Advanced Russian Language and Area Studies Program in Moscow





Ani Garabed Ohanian

accepted Ohanian's application to study at the International University of Moscow but it is not clear when she will have the opportunity to travel there. Instead she plans to analyze the source materials she collected last year in the United Kingdom and France.

Ohanian also received the New York Public Library's Short-Term Research Grant. She will examine archival documents in the library's Slavic and East European Collections when it reopens to the public. She looks forward to the opportunity to study materials in the Jacques Kayaloff collection, which contains original documents in Armenian, English, French, and Russian, all languages in which Ohanian has fluency. Having passed her comprehensive exams and defended her dissertation prospectus, she is devoted to full time research.

Fromson fellow **Mohammad Sajjadur Rahman** was the recipient of research funding from the Debra and Jeffrey Geller fund for his dissertation project *Wartime Collaborators and the Politics of Justice in Bangladesh (1971-1975)*. The project focuses on different narratives about the East Pakistani loyalists, widely referred to as "collaborators," who supported Pakistan's counter-insurgency operations against Bengali freedom fighters in 1971 and what those narratives reveal about the historiography of the war.

During the 1971 War, pro-Pakistani loyalists collaborated with the Pakistani army in perpetrating atrocities against Bengalis of East Pakistan. The portrayal of the collaborators as fanatical ideologues betraying fellow Bengalis in the name of Islam obscures a more complex phenomenon of wartime collaboration, as well as the multilayered and ambiguous motivations of the collaborators. It

also obscures why some members of non-Muslim indigenous groups opposed pro-independence Bengali guerilla forces. Rahman shows that loyalist East Pakistanis were not a monolithic Islamist group; they belonged to various political parties, including secular ones. Most importantly, current historiography does not answer why pro-state collaboration occurred and why the legacy of the idea of collaboration shaped the politics of denunciation and justice in postwar Bangladesh.

Rahman explores post-war political debates about whether to prosecute collaborators. The collective memory of "betrayal" and "treason" contributed to the nationalists' grand narrative of the war and helps explain why collaboration remains one of the most debated issues in Bangladeshi politics. Rahman investigates both domestic and foreign reactions to the trials held between 1972-74. Drawing on declassified secret diplomatic cables, he probes why the Bangladesh government declared general amnesty. Most of the legal documents from the 1972-73 period have

been destroyed or lost. However, in summer 2019, Rahman located materials on cases filed under the Collaborators Act of 1972. In addition, approximately thirty verdicts suggest how the court viewed collaboration. Interviews of several key individuals offer another view of the judicial process.

Rahman draws on diverse sources including memoirs written between 1976 and 1990 in Bangla and English by alleged collaborators. Parliamentary debates regarding collaborators conducted between 1972-81 provide further insight. At the US National Archives, he discovered documents related to the US position on collaborator trials, a subject that emerged as a sub-topic in light of detailed policy discussions within the British diplomatic community. He has also collected relevant documents from the UN Archive in New York, the ICRC and the UNHCR archives in Geneva, the International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam, the Churchill Archive in Cambridge and from the National Archive of the UK.

Rahman has been highly productive while writing his dissertation. Recipient of the CGS-Square Fellowship from the Center for Genocide Studies, Dhaka University, he will submit a paper on British viewpoints on the local tribunal to fulfil his fellowship requirement. The Dhaka-based University Press Limited published his co-edited volumes *Neoliberal Development in Bangladesh: People on the Margin* (February 2020) and *Identity in the Globalized World* (forthcoming). Leading South Asian film critic Zakir Hossain Razu is his co-editor. Two chapters will appear in the forthcoming book *Islam in its Plenitude* edited by Imtiaz Ahmed. Rahman serves as senior advisor for the project *Genocide '71: A Memory Map* that

presents a digital recreation of the war. Other projects include acting as an advisor to the newly created *Bangladesh on Record*, an online platform for preserving historical documents, diaries, letters, images from throughout the history of Bangladesh, and he is one of two principle investigators reporting on media ownership in Bangladesh. The National Endowment for Democracy, USA is funding the latter project through their Bangladeshi partner, Centre for Governance Studies, a first of its kind for understanding media ownership in Bangladesh.

**Jessa Sinnott**, the Rosalie and Sidney Rose Fellow, began her doctoral studies after completing an MA in European Studies at New York University. In addition, she received a research award from the Ferenc and Ilona (Schulhoff) Czigler fund. During her MA program, Sinnott attended the March of the Living in Auschwitz and used her experience in ethnographic fieldwork to conduct interviews with participants and local residents. She questioned them about this international commemorative event in conjunction with the politics of Auschwitz-Birkenau versus Oświęcim-Brzezinka. Her MA thesis examined the supposed “Judaization” of what was for decades considered a place of Polish suffering. For her dissertation project, she will continue to research the Holocaust in Poland.

Sinnott’s dissertation project will examine neighborhood and pogrom violence in Nazi and Soviet occupied Poland. She seeks to create a fluid snapshot of the local context in which the murder of Polish Jewry unfolded. This project will consider three overarching categories of analysis to create a sociohistorical narrative of the perpetration of mass violence: the identification of actors and methods of aggression, ethnic and/or national socialization and shifting moralities, and the economic incentives for committing intra-communal violence. Sinnott aims to write a microhistory that will serve as a framework in which to examine the broader themes of interethnic relations in Poland, Polish antisemitism, and the national identity and culture that permitted attitudes of indifference and violence in the face of Jewish suffering. Her research will demonstrate the ways in which anti-Jewish neighborhood aggression fit into the totality of occupational violence.

Sinnott’s dissertation will rely on a variety of integral primary source materials. These include police and military records, documentation from postwar trials for “crimes against the Polish nation,” held by the Soviet-imposed Polish authorities and collected by the Chief Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes Against the Polish Nation, now known as the Institute of National Remembrance (IPN). She will utilize oral histories and written testimonies available at the Pilecki Institute in Warsaw as well as the archives of the IPN and their regional branch archives, the USHMM, and Yad Vashem.

Research in German and Polish sources will be essential for her project. Over the summer, she participated in the University of Pittsburgh’s Summer Language Institute to advance her Polish skills.



Jessa Sinnott

In fall, she queried archives regarding document availability and worked to gain access to digitized records of archival source documents on the prosecution of perpetrators of pogroms and intimate violence that were defined as crimes against the Polish nation.

## LIFE AFTER THE CENTER: MICHAEL GEHERAN PHD '16

As a boy visiting his grandparents in Gersfeld, Germany, Michael Geheran PhD '16 would often peruse the names inscribed on the town's memorials to the fallen soldiers of the Great War. Eventually, he became curious about the Jewish names on these monuments leading him to wonder about the fate of Jewish veterans during the Holocaust. When asked, Geheran's grandfather was unsure but assumed that the Nazis spared them out of respect for their service. Now an assistant professor at the United States Military Academy at West Point and Deputy Director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Geheran has addressed this lingering question in his first book. *Comrades Betrayed: Jewish World War I Veterans under Hitler*, based on Geheran's Strassler Center dissertation, was published in September by Cornell University Press in their series *Battlegrounds: Cornell Studies in Military History*.

Geheran is uniquely suited to his subject. A veteran of the US military, he enlisted as a non-commissioned officer following his college graduation. While serving in the infantry, he was posted to Camp Casey in South Korea, close to the demilitarized zone with North Korea. In his recollection, military service made Geheran feel more masculine and, as a German-born American, better integrated into society. Reading first person accounts about German Jewish soldiers, he sympathized with their desire to challenge stereotypes about Jews as weak or disloyal. Geheran was familiar, too, with the sense of recognition that veterans expect to receive from the nation they serve. His research revealed that Jewish WWI veterans believed that the Nazis would recognize their sacrifices for the Fatherland and that their service would protect them from persecution.

After the army, Geheran worked at a corporate job but was eager to study history seriously. While contemplating PhD programs, he read Professor Thomas Kühne's seminal book on comradeship published in 2006. Learning that Kühne, whose book was written in German, taught at Clark not far from his home, he contacted him about studying under his direction. Initially, Geheran had planned to research the Wehrmacht's actions as they withdrew from Russia yet the fate of the German Jewish veterans continued to fascinate him. Geheran presented the topic in a paper that was well-received at the Strassler Center's first international graduate student conference. As no serious research had been done on the subject, he chose to pursue it for his dissertation.

After earning his PhD in 2016, Geheran spent two years as a post-doctoral fellow at West Point. His army background and interest in military history helped him adapt to the culture of a military academy. In teaching cadets about the Holocaust and genocide, he appreciates that he has a serious mission to create awareness and to train officers to prevent atrocities where the military operates. Geheran also understands that he has different priorities at West Point than at the liberal arts colleges where he previously taught. In his comparative genocide course, the cadets examine faxes between the UN and Roméo Dallaire, who served as commander of the UN



Michael Geheran

peacekeeping forces in Rwanda during the 1994 Genocide. Dallaire defied orders in order to protect vulnerable civilians and his actions are the subject of a case study that is a joint project between West Point and the USHMM. Geheran, chief editor of this digital publication, seeks to understand the role of character in leadership, an essential component for developing future military officers.

Geheran spent a year managing programs at the Strassler Center before assuming his post-doctoral fellowship. The skills he developed have served him well in his current capacity as Deputy Director of the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies where he also organizes events and programs. Despite his full schedule, he remains intrigued with the fate of German Jewish soldiers. He has plenty of material left to publish on the subject and he remains eager to learn more individual stories. As a veteran and a West Point professor, he has found a subject that remains worthy of his continued attention.

Mary Jane Rein

### LIFE AFTER THE CENTER

Fall 2020 finds Strassler Center alumni affiliated with a range of institutions. A select list of appointments follows:

**Elizabeth Anthony PhD '16**, Director, Visiting Scholar Programs, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Sara Elise Brown PhD '16**, Executive Director of the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights, and Genocide Education (Chhange) at Brookdale Community College

**Beth Cohen PhD '03**, Lecturer, California State University, Northridge

**Sarah Cushman PhD '10**, Director, Holocaust Educational Foundation, Northwestern University

**Tiberiu Galis Ph.D. '15**, Executive Director, Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation

**Michael Geheran PhD '16**, Deputy Director, Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, United States Military Academy at West Point

**Adara Goldberg, Ph.D. '12**, Director of the Holocaust Resource Center and Diversity Council on Global Education and Citizenship, Kean University

**Naama Haviv MA '06**, Director of Development at MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger

**Alexis Herr PhD '14**, Lecturer, San Francisco State University

**Stefan Ionescu PhD '13**, Theodore Zev and Alice R. Weiss-Holocaust Educational Foundation Visiting Associate Professor in Holocaust Studies, Department of History, Northwestern University

**Jeffrey Koerber PhD '15**, Assistant Professor of Holocaust History, Chapman University

**Ümit Kurt PhD '16**, Polonsky Fellow at the Van Leer Institute, Jerusalem and Lecturer, Department of Middle East and African History, Tel Aviv University

**Samantha Lakin (ABD)** Graduate Research Fellow, Program on Negotiation, Harvard University Law School

**Natalya Lazar (ABD)**, Program Director, Initiative on Ukrainian-Jewish Shared History and the Holocaust in Ukraine, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, US Holocaust Memorial Museum

**Beth Lilach (ABD)**, Director of Education at the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, Toronto



Steve Migridichian, chair of the friends of the Kaloosdian Mugar Chair, Asya Darbinyan PhD'19, Taner Akçam, Vikrant Yadav

**Jody Russell Manning (ABD)**, Lecturer and Director of Programming, Center for the Study of the Holocaust, Genocide, and Human Rights, Rowan University

**Khatchig Mouradian PhD '16**, Lecturer, Middle Eastern, South Asian, and African Studies Department and Director, Armenian Studies Program, Columbia University

**Ilana F. Offenberger PhD '10**, Lecturer, Department of History, University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth

**Mike Phoenix PhD '18** Postgraduate Research Associate - Historian Subject Matter Expert at SNA International, Honolulu, Hawaii

**Alicja Podbielska (ABD)**, Vivian G. Prins Fellow at the Museum of Jewish Heritage - a Living Memorial to the Holocaust, New York

**Christine Schmidt PhD '03**, Deputy Director and Head of Research, Wiener Library for the Study of the Holocaust and Genocide, London

**Raz Segal PhD '13**, Assistant Professor of Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Endowed Professor in the Study of Modern Genocide and Director, Master of Arts in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Stockton University

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

**Lotta Stone PhD '10**, Historian and Research Associate, Middleton Place Foundation, Charleston, South Carolina

**Jason Tingler PhD '19**, Lecturer, Department of Arts and Sciences, Marion Technical College

## UNDERGRADUATE NEWS

Professor Shelly Tenenbaum, Coordinator of Undergraduate Activities at the Strassler Center, oversees an internship program that typically affords opportunities for undergraduates to gain real life experience at organizations around the globe. The pandemic interrupted the plans of two students who deferred their internships until summer 2021. Samantha Whittle '21, recipient of the Doris Tager award, was therefore especially grateful to spend summer 2020 as an editorial intern with the Upstander Project. Having rushed back from her study abroad program at Charles University in Prague due to Covid-19, Whittle was fortunate to receive a revised workplan allowing her to intern remotely. Her responsibilities involved assisting with the preparation of a teaching guide to accompany the documentary film *Bounty*.

The Upstander Project is a non-profit organization dedicated to producing documentaries and curricular materials that educate students in grades 6-12 about genocide and mass atrocities. Founded by documentarian Adam Mazo and curriculum designer Mishy Lesser, the Upstander Project aims to make difficult history accessible to students. Lesser gave a guest lecture on bounty proclamations in Tenenbaum's fall 2019 course, "Genocide", that inspired Whittle's interest in the topic. An undergraduate concentrator in HGS and a Comparative Literature major who won a prestigious undergraduate essay prize in German Studies, Whittle is currently writing a senior honors thesis on film and the Holocaust under the direction of Professor Robert Tobin.

The film *Bounty* teaches about a genocidal chapter in US history that targeted the Penobscot people in order to take their lands by any means possible. In 1775, Lieutenant Governor Spencer Phips, Commander in Chief of the Province of Massachusetts-Bay, issued a proclamation that called for annihilating the *Penobscot Tribe of Indians*. The proclamation offered colonial settlers a bounty from the public treasury in payment for every scalp or body brought to Boston. This shameful edict called upon "his Majesty's subjects to pursue, captivate, kill, and destroy every member of the tribe regardless of age." Phips signed the proclamation, one of 58 bounty proclamations issued in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century New England, in the council chambers of Boston's Old State House, which serves as a powerful setting for the film.

The first order of business for Whittle was to establish a timeline for the bounties discussed in the film and teaching guide. She consulted archival sources to confirm details and to provide images related to scalplings. By researching historic documents in the Massachusetts archives, she was able to determine specifics including the prices for scalps, the names of scalpers, and information on the victims. Whittle went through the entire 100-page teaching guide as she edited, added sources for images, organized bibliographies, and formatted the document.

The curricular materials Whittle helped to develop make explicit that the scalp proclamations were intended to kill Native people in



Samantha Whittle

order to take their lands. This process of dispossession involved measures such as seizures, deeds, and allotments that allowed the settler population to solidify their presence in New England. The teacher guide also provides background information on Raphael Lemkin, the origins of the word genocide, and the drafting of the U.N. Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. These lessons on genocide provide a framework for interpreting scalp proclamations and the question of genocidal intent in light of later history. The film's directors, Dawn Neptune Adams and Maulian Dana, are both Penobscot and their work on the film demonstrates their agency and indicates the continued survival of the tribe.

The Upstander Project advocates that "Native history is U.S. history." Professor Tenenbaum showed their documentary *Dawnland* as part of the Especially for Students Series in 2019. Examining the Maine-Wabanaki Truth and Reconciliation Commission, the first government-sanctioned TRC in US history, *Dawnland* addresses the forced removal and assimilation of Wabanaki children in Maine. Tenenbaum, Project Scholar for a 2020 Mass Humanities grant that funded a week-long Upstanders Academy for teachers and museum educators on the genocide against Indigenous Peoples and the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, taught a class on the UN Convention on Genocide. Tenenbaum's activities advance efforts to expand the scope of research and teaching at the Strassler Center to include mass violence against Indigenous Communities.

Mary Jane Rein

## ROSE LIBRARY

As the 19<sup>th</sup> century British politician Augustine Birrell observed, “Libraries are not made; they grow. Good as it is to inherit a library, it is better to collect one.” Growing the Rose Library entails maintenance as well as continued acquisition, which were the main themes of the work carried out during academic year 2019-20. A satellite of Clark’s main Goddard Library, the Rose’s collection of books will eventually be fully integrated into the Goddard catalogue. In order to carry out this work, however, cataloguing specialist Michelle Matthews and her staff must handle each book individually. The tedious project of processing more than 9,000 volumes has been underway for more than a decade, but the newly appointed University Librarian, Laura Robinson has recognized the imperative to hasten accessibility.

Shortly after taking the helm of the library, Robinson considered how to improve the visibility of the Rose Library. Her first task was to provide access to two important databases of testimonies, which are now listed and available in Goddard Library’s *A to Z Databases List*. The Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive is home to more than 55,000 video testimonies primarily of Holocaust survivors but also witnesses to other genocides. This resource has been available to users at the Rose Library since 2010. In addition, in December 2019, the Strassler Center became an access site to the more than 4,400 Holocaust testimonies in Yale University’s Fortunoff Archive, which comprises 12,000 hours of recorded material. These databases are essential to the research of our graduate students and an important tool for undergraduates to hear first person accounts of genocide. Adding them to Goddard’s database list makes them available to any Clark University student anywhere in the world thanks to the university’s proxy server.

Always looking to grow our library collection, we are grateful to the many people who have contacted us this year with book donations. Inveterate book collector, Barry Hoffman, continues to allocate funds and purchase books to expand our holdings and meet the individual research needs of our students. We are also grateful to individuals for donating books from their personal libraries and we accept relevant titles not already in our collection. Financial support allows us to collect the most recently published titles essential to original research projects. Such generosity is recognized by book plating volumes purchased from contributions allocated to the library.

Continuing the commitment to provide access to special collections, we have made finding aids available to a world-wide audience



through Clark University’s Digital Commons. This is a full-text, multi-media, online depository that provides access to the diverse array of scholarly, professional, scientific, and creative output produced or housed at Clark University. The Digital Commons’ platform for aggregating, organizing and disseminating artifacts increases the visibility of authors’ works; maximizes research impact; facilitates interdisciplinary research; and provides local, regional, and global communities with searchable access to Clark knowledge and content.” More than a thousand individuals from around the world have downloaded and used these finding aids in their research.

The Kline Collection, a unique historical archive housed in the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing, includes a fascinating series of multimedia materials. Comprised of mostly 8mm and 16mm filmstrips and 35mm film, they present unique access challenges given their unusable and unstable format. The largest part of the collection is a group of more than a hundred 35mm filmstrips of *Bildbericht der Woche* (weekly picture reports). The Nazi Party’s *Reichspropagandaleitung* produced these filmstrips on a weekly basis for use at small meetings and in outlying areas where the public had limited access to weekly newsreels at movie theaters or neighborhood party meetings. These rare films and filmstrips are undergoing a process of restoration and digitization and will soon become available on Clark’s Digital Commons.

Augustine Burrill could never have imagined such diverse collections in a 19<sup>th</sup> century library but they make the Rose Library a valuable resource to current students and researchers.

*Robyn Conroy*



# **GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT**

### DONOR PROFILE: ANNA VOREMBERG ELLEMENT '13 AND DAVID VOREMBERG '72

Father-daughter duo David VoreMBERG '72 and Anna VoreMBERG Ellement '13 share much more than a Clark BA. Their experiences as a son and granddaughter of Jewish refugees from Nazi Germany shaped them both profoundly. David was born and raised in Queens, NY to Henry and Beate (Goldmann). After Kristallnacht, a teenaged Henry escaped to the US and eventually helped to secure the safe arrival of his mother and father, who had been taken to the Buchenwald concentration camp after Kristallnacht and was a decorated veteran of World War I. While Beate was able to emigrate, her escape was more difficult and her parents perished in the Łódź ghetto and in the Chelmno death camp. Having experienced dislocation and terrible loss, the VoreMBERGs built a new life in the US and mostly avoided discussing these painful experiences; yet, they passed along the trauma of the Holocaust in subtle ways. Serious engagement with history has been a way for David and Anna to overcome the intergenerational pain common to families who survived or escaped the Holocaust.

Respect for learning and a commitment to advance just causes are twin threads that connect the generations of VoreMBERGs. Henry and Beate set an example as dedicated philanthropists whose support was often anonymous. Deprived of attending high school and university, Henry and Beate valued education. Once Henry sold his business importing dairy products from Europe, he and his wife became generous supporters of Jewish schools and institutions.

At Clark, Anna concentrated in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. The course "Gender, War and Peace," inspired her to intern at the Boston Consortium for Gender, Security and Human Rights for which she received the Ina Gordon Undergraduate Award in Holocaust Studies. Another highlight of her undergraduate experience was helping to organize the international summit *Informed Activism* that drew over 600 activists to examine mineral rights and conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Anna concluded her Clark career by earning high honors in Psychology and she received the Herman Witkin Award for Creativity in Psychology. After graduating with high honors, she served as the Managing Director for End Rape on Campus, a groundbreaking survival advocacy organization dedicated to ending sexual violence. As a Duke University law student, Anna continued to earn accolades for her extracurricular achievements, receiving the aptly named *Over and Above Award* at her 2020 graduation. In addition to serving as a staff editor at the *Duke Journal of Gender Law and Policy*, she worked as a student attorney in Duke Law's clinic program, supporting local non-profits in Durham, North Carolina. Anna's accomplishments continue to be a source of pride to David and his wife Fran Snyder, a faculty member in Religious Studies at Lang College, the New School University.

Anna's exceptional experience at the Strassler Center piqued her father's interest in the program. Having pursued political, environmental, and social justice causes in his 20s, David joined his father in the dairy business and eventually established his own company.



Anna VoreMBERG Ellement and David VoreMBERG

Once retired, he happily resumed his academic interests in history, genealogy, and antique maps. A 2016 trip to Germany was an occasion for the whole family to visit his mother's hometown of Zella-Mehlis where they placed three *stolpersteine*, small brass paving stones inscribed with the names of his mother and her parents. A ceremony in front of Beate Goldmann's one-time home included the mayor and a contingent of townspeople. After installing the brass plaques, they visited a local school where a class of 9<sup>th</sup> grade students learning about the Holocaust described their extensive research on the Goldmanns.

David and Anna were impressed by the willingness of Germans to learn about the country's Jewish history. They thought about how the US has failed to reckon with its responsibility for racial injustice in contrast to the prevalence of Holocaust memory in Germany. David now serves as co-chair of the Strassler Center Leadership Council and he is committed to our efforts to teach and research the Holocaust, genocide, and mass violence. His commitment to this enterprise is an expression of healing and a reflection of his personal history. In deference to David's wish for this profile to focus on Anna, I conclude by noting that her empathy and sensitivity to issues of justice will make her a marvelous lawyer.

Mary Jane Rein



## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

The David P. Angel Professorship, dedicated to Holocaust Pedagogy and the Study of Antisemitism, has attracted a small but devoted group of donors eager to recognize the recently departed Clark President. Out of admiration for all he accomplished over the course of his thirty-year tenure at the university, these generous friends created a permanent legacy by contributing toward an endowed chair in his name. This faculty addition comes at a significant moment in the development of the Strassler Center as it expands in crucial new directions to become a truly comprehensive program. According to Angel, “the Center’s unique achievements and continued development demonstrate beyond any doubt that Clark, a small university with its origin as an institution of graduate education, has been an ideal home to develop a niche PhD program into a globally renowned flagship. I am honored to continue my long association with the Strassler Center thanks to these donors who have seen fit to enlarge the scope of its research and teaching.”

As part of the administrative leadership at Clark, Angel was a key player in fostering the success of the Strassler Center. First as Dean of Graduate Studies, then as Provost, and finally as President, he helped to advance the program through his quiet but steadfast advocacy. Most recently, his leadership was crucial to the expansion of the Strassler Center’s mini campus, as he oversaw the campaign to construct the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing that opened in 2019. This addition created much needed space to expand the program as part of a strategic vision to grow its faculty in order to incorporate crucial new areas of inquiry.

The idea to recognize Angel’s contributions by honoring him with a named professorship began with two extraordinary Clark supporters. In 1998, during his tenure as board chair, trustee emeritus David H. Strassler MBA ’11 and his brother Robert endowed the Strassler Center. Rebecca Colin ’89 PhD, inaugural chair of the Strassler Center Leadership Council, has directed considerable support to the Strassler Center out of a deep interest in the subject of genocide, especially the Holocaust, but also because of a long-standing family relationship to the Strasslers. Sam Flug, Rebecca’s grandfather, and Sam Strassler, David’s father were business partners. Rebecca and David were delighted to honor the memory of the friendship between these men by renaming the Strassler Family Chair, now the Strassler Colin Flug Chair. Saluting the next generation of leadership in fostering the Center’s growth, David Strassler observed, “I am delighted to have partnered with Rebecca to help bring a new professorship to fruition and I welcome her dedication to the Center’s continued success.”

Matching gifts from David and Rebecca ignited the campaign to fund the Angel Chair. Stephen Corman, a member of the Strassler Center Leadership Council, agreed to direct a generous bequest toward the professorship. The estate of Thomas Zand, a local pediatrician born to Holocaust survivors in Czechoslovakia, committed

significant funding. In keeping with Dr. Zand’s interests, the chair holder will seek to advance collaborations with Israeli institutions. A substantial gift from an anonymous alumnus moved the initiative forward considerably. Judi Bohn ’75 who has devoted herself to the memory of the Holocaust and to assisting aging survivors as part of her work at Facing History and Ourselves, joined her husband Larry Bohn MA ’76, to bring total funds pledged to within sight of the final amount needed. Linda Savitsky ’70 and former board chair Mel Rosenblatt ’53 were delighted to show their support by supporting this initiative.

The Angel Professorship comes together at a time of rising antisemitism and increasing distortion of the history and legacy of the Holocaust. A central rationale of Holocaust education has been to spread tolerance, diversity, and inclusion in the spirit of “Never Again.” Despite these efforts, there has been a surge in discriminatory attitudes with violent consequences against Jews and other minorities around the globe. The Strassler Center, with its long-standing interest in fostering serious research about what constitutes effective education about the Holocaust and other genocides, will collaborate with the Hiatt Center for Urban Education and other programs at Clark to promote greater appreciation for the relationship between education and understanding about antisemitism, racism, human rights, genocidal violence, and prevention of atrocity.

While the endowment for the Angel Professorship gets established, the Thomas Zand Professor, will inaugurate teaching and research about Holocaust Pedagogy and the Study of Antisemitism for three years beginning in fall ’21. In fact, the Strassler Center will welcome two temporary appointments at the same time. The Charles E. Scheidt Professor of Genocide Studies and Genocide Prevention will introduce much needed expertise on mass violence in the global south. The holder of this position will have training in human rights, international law, political science, or other disciplines that demand in-depth local experience and knowledge. With these faculty additions, the Strassler Center will better encompass the various parts of the globe afflicted by mass violence, and will link the study of past human rights violations to pedagogical and political efforts to prevent current and future violations.

Upon his departure from Clark, President Angel helped to ensure that the Strassler Center will continue its innovative tradition of training students who tackle the challenges of a complex and rapidly changing world. The accomplishments described in this report show that our students are working toward that goal and they are also a testament to the generosity of the donors listed in the following pages. We acknowledge all those who made gifts in the 2019-20 academic year with sincere thanks.

*Mary Jane Rein*

### IN MEMORIAM: HOWARD KULIN

The Strassler Center lost a dear friend and supporter with the August passing of Dr. Howard Kulin, Professor Emeritus of Pediatrics and Chief of the Division of Pediatric Endocrinology at Pennsylvania State University College of Medicine. A man of erudition and wide interests, Howard was passionate about many things including antique maps. Growing up in Worcester, he participated in the Wendell Phillips Parker Nature Training School, a summer program of the Natural History Society of Worcester where he developed a keen interest in maps and geography. If “God created war so that Americans would learn geography,” as Mark Twain observed, then Howard proved the opposite. It was love not war that shaped his life as maps inspired him to travel and led him to discover his life partner.

Howard left Worcester as a young man to attend Exeter Academy and then Harvard College. As a student at Cornell Medical School, he studied in Denmark and met his wife Hanne. They married and raised three sons in Pennsylvania but returned to Denmark often. Although he never knew him, stories about his father-in-law fascinated Howard. As a young teacher during the Nazi occupation of Denmark, Mogens Høirup was a leader in the Danish resistance. The gestapo arrested him in October 1944 and imprisoned him in Denmark and then in the Neuengamme Concentration camp. Among his papers, the Kulings discovered an inspiring New Year’s Eve speech that he delivered to fellow prisoners in a Danish camp. Howard and Hanne published a slim book recounting these war activities. Eager to honor the memory and sacrifice of Mogens, the Kulings turned to the Danish Institute for International Studies (DIIS) in Copenhagen looking for an American program to host a partnership. Genocide scholar Erik Markusen, then a senior research fellow at DIIS and a professor in the Department of Sociology at Southwest Minnesota State University, suggested Clark University not knowing the family’s ties to Worcester.

Following the deaths of his parents, Howard sought to connect his Jewish roots in Worcester with his profound respect for his Danish father-in-law. Thanks to Markusen’s suggestion, he contacted the Strassler Center and proposed to establish a Danish-American partnership that he generously funded in memory of his parents. The Louis and Ann Kulin Endowment supports ongoing cooperation between the Strassler Center and Danish as well as Scandinavian partners. Bridging Denmark and Worcester through study of the Holocaust and genocide linked his heritage with that of Hanne.

Once established, the Danish partnership provided a European foothold for the Strassler Center and became a model for interna-



Howard Kulin, Emil Kjerte, Hanne Kulin

national collaboration. Professor Markusen visited the Strassler Center in October 2005 to lay the groundwork for a program of faculty and student exchanges. In summer 2006, a contingent of Clark students travelled to Denmark to attend the Øresund Summer University course: *Never Again? Genocide in Bosnia, Rwanda and Darfur*. A series of faculty visits followed, including a semester-long professorship held by the DIIS scholar Cecilie Felicia Stokholm Banke, an expert on the politics of memory in Europe. The ongoing exchange proved visionary and strengthened the global focus of the Strassler Center especially once the decision was made to host a series of international doctoral student conferences in cooperation with DIIS. These took place triennially and brought Danish and Scandinavian scholars and students to the Clark campus.

Over the past four years, the Danish partnership took a new form when Emil Kjerte arrived as a PhD student from Denmark. The Kulings were delighted to have this promising young scholar serve as the first-ever Louis and Ann Kulin Fellow. It gave Howard great satisfaction to know that Emil would continue to strengthen the ties he had established.

Mary Jane Rein

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Income from the following endowed funds provide a permanent source of support for the ongoing activities and operation of the Strassler Center.

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Office of University Advancement  
Clark University  
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## GRATITUDE



President David Angel at the opening of the Colin-Flug Graduate Study Wing

In summarizing the activities and accomplishments achieved during the academic year 2019-20, which included a semester uniquely challenged by pandemic, disruption, and isolation, I must agree with the Enlightenment Philosopher Voltaire: “Appreciation is a wonderful thing: it makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well.” As the faculty, students, and staff of the Strassler Center dispersed to their individual places of quarantine, we missed the sense of togetherness we cherish but affirmed our shared sense of purpose. More than ever, we recognize and appreciate that the accomplishments described in this report are the product of a joint endeavor that depends on the work of each member of our community. The Strassler Center continued to function efficiently, even when operated remotely, thanks to the dedication and efforts of our small staff and it is my pleasure to thank them here.

Robyn Conroy, our efficient program manager and librarian,

keeps the Rose Library as well as our events and programs running smoothly. During the pandemic, she added to her technical skills by expertly organizing and troubleshooting events on zoom. Prepared for a busy spring of comprehensive exams and dissertation prospectus defenses, she quickly pivoted to an online format. Alissa Duke, ever cheerful and ready to assist, ensures that our busy Center is a welcoming environment. She demonstrated her constant care for our students and extended her characteristic warmth through virtual gatherings. Kim Vance diligently oversees the Center’s finances; her careful attention to the budget is the foundation for all of our decisions. She faithfully addressed the financial challenges that the pandemic presented to the PhD students whose plans were suddenly upended. Our student workers, Hannah Garelick ’20 and Lamisa Muksitu ’22, both concentrators in Holocaust and Genocide Studies, helped in countless ways and were a joy to have as

## GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

co-workers. I am grateful that the excellent work of each of these colleagues redound to us all.


The Strassler Center also profits from the contributions of professionals across the Clark University campus. In particular, I salute the collegiality of University Librarian Laura Robinson, newly appointed to oversee Goddard Library and Joseph Kalinowski, recently promoted as Vice President of Information Technology and Chief Information Officer. We are grateful to the members of the University Advancement team for their assistance and especially Vice President Jeff Gillooly, Robbie Heath, Jennifer Hitt '95, and Jonathan Kappel '81. Jim Cormier is perennially helpful with our media needs. We will miss José Santiago who beautifully main-

tained our complex of buildings until he was reassigned to another part of campus. Kathy Canon (Controller), Lorinda Fearebay (Marketing and Communications), and Kim McElroy (University Dining) have recently departed from the university; their contributions over the years have been greatly appreciated and they too will be missed.

In May, we bid farewell to President David Angel. Happily, the Strassler Center will continue to feel his presence thanks to a named professorship in his honor. The David P. Angel Chair will be a permanent legacy of his 30-year tenure at Clark and his rewarding association with the Strassler Center. We thank him for his friendship as we wish him well in his future endeavors.

*Mary Jane Rein*





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