



Gratz Insider, May 2017 - Story Continuation

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Student Spotlight on Jackie Kemper: Teaching the Holocaust

At her school, the Christian School of York, Kemper is known as the “Holocaust expert,” a title she earned from years of study, culminating with her graduation this month from the Gratz College [master’s program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#).

Kemper’s interest in this area was sparked 18 years ago, when as a new history teacher, she attended a program for educators at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. Years later, she was accepted by the National Endowment for the Humanities to travel to Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic with 29 other educators from across the country to study the Holocaust for five weeks.

Profoundly affected by this experience, Kemper approached the one person in her family who had witnessed the inhumanity of the Holocaust firsthand, but never spoke of it: her grandfather. Drafted into the Army in 1943, her grandfather was part of Eisenhower’s drive to get GIs into the camps. Although he was at a camp in southern Germany for only a day or two, he told her, “I can’t get the images out of my head. They live with me every day of my life.”

Kemper was driven to learn more about the Holocaust, but was hampered by financial and geographic limitations in her search for a graduate program. A few years later, she applied for and was awarded a Mandell Fellowship from Gratz, and by January 2015, she was a student in Gratz College master’s program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Kemper teaches several history classes at her school, but until the last couple of years, her teaching of the Holocaust was relegated to a unit in her world history class. While at Gratz, she created her elective course on World War II and the Holocaust, which received dual enrollment status, meaning her students may be eligible to receive college credit for it. Had she not been enrolled in a master’s program like the one at Gratz, her course would not have qualified for this status. Kemper dedicated her final project at Gratz to reworking and revising her entire curriculum, with the support of her adviser, Josey Fisher, the director of the Gratz College Holocaust Oral History Archive.

Kemper’s students have been so affected by her course that they support mandatory Holocaust education in every school. Kemper agrees, but questions whether there are enough teachers qualified to teach this subject, adding, “That’s where Gratz comes in.”

She describes Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Gratz as a phenomenal program that she would recommend to anyone. “I love the program,” she says. “It’s a bittersweet feeling to be finished.”

As a result of her expertise in this area, Kemper has presented at teacher conferences, offering sessions on how to teach the Holocaust. She was also one of only 15 people selected to attend The Jan Karski Institute for Holocaust Education last summer at Georgetown University.

Explaining her philosophy on teaching students about the Holocaust, Kemper says:

You have to teach these lessons. You can't avoid it because it's hard. The goal is to make this world a better place and to prevent genocide from happening. I think education is one of the greatest ways to do that.

For more information on the Gratz College graduate programs in [Holocaust and Genocide Studies](#), contact Mindy Blechman, program coordinator, at mblechman@gratz.edu or at 215-635-7300, ext. 154. In addition to the master's, Gratz offers a graduate certificate program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies and will soon be offering a Ph.D. program as well.

Although the Mandell Fellowship is no longer accepting applications, please ask Mindy about other scholarship opportunities available at Gratz.