

2019 Summer Institute on Teaching the Holocaust for Social Justice Opens

"Quality Holocaust education may have the potential to bridge some of the divides our nation is experiencing.... It doesn't preach. It teaches. It engages at a personal level. It promotes self-reflection and critical thinking about the world and one's own roles and responsibilities."

-Edna Friedberg, "Why Holocaust Analogies are Dangerous, *Memory and Action*, Spring 2019

By Leslie Lawner

The Southern Poverty Law Center reports that there are over 1,000 hate groups in the United States. According to the latest data reported by the Department of Justice, in the year 2017, the U.S. saw more than 7,000 hate crimes, although ProPublica reports that this number is likely hugely understated. We are all aware of the increasing prevalence of intolerance and hate crimes here and around the world, and we all bear some responsibility to stand up to hate when we encounter it. But, as Ms. Friedberg points out, teachers are uniquely situated to address hate and prejudice in their classrooms, bringing the lessons of history to our children and stemming the proliferation of intolerance and acts of hate.

To this end, the Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights (TOLI) sponsors seminars around the world training teachers on how to educate students about human rights and social justice through the lens of the Holocaust and other genocides with the goal of preventing future atrocities. We are fortunate in New Mexico that this year TOLI is sponsoring the 6th Summer Institute on Teaching the Holocaust for Social Justice at Manzano High School, June 17 through 21.

Four teachers, Susan Quintana of Pojoaque Valley High School, Michelle Thompson-Loyd, who teaches at Manzano High School, Leslie Lawner from Sidney Gutierrez Middle School in Roswell, and Barb Lazar of the Bosque School, will conduct a 5-day seminar designed for New Mexico

teachers. The 25 teachers attending this year represent every corner of our state. For many teachers, especially those in rural counties, interaction with members of the Jewish faith is rare, and understanding of the faith is limited. Teachers who might be interested in using the many resources available to teach the Holocaust and its lessons to their students are often overwhelmed and feel ill-equipped to take on the challenge. The purpose of the New Mexico seminar is to equip teachers with the content knowledge and tools so that they can confidently craft instruction that will meet their larger objectives.

Lessons on the role of identity in society, the history of antisemitism, the rise of Nazi Germany, and the events of the Holocaust will demonstrate how to bring this information into the classroom in meaningful and productive ways. Several invited speakers will also be featured. Conductor Murry Sidlin, creator of the film *Defiant Requiem*, which tells an inspiring story about the role music played in Theresienstadt, will introduce a new curriculum developed for high school students to accompany the film. Todd Hennessey, who works with Father Patrick Desbois' *Yahad in Unum* organization, dedicated to locating mass graves of Jewish victims of the killing squads in Eastern Europe, will present the work of that group along with the materials they have created for classroom use. Sherry Bard of ADL's Echoes and Reflections will introduce their curriculum through a lesson on the Final Solution.

Because the subject matter covered in the seminar is so emotionally difficult, the sem-



inar, which is free to teachers, provides opportunities for purposeful relaxation, recreation, and socializing. Two evening activities are planned, including a performance by the Q-Tones, the New Mexico Gay Men's Chorus *a cappella* group, a group which shares the mission of reducing intolerance in our community.

A number of teachers have participated in the summer institute more than once. The teachers have reported back that the materials and ideas they get from the seminar are extremely helpful and many want to explore

the subject in more depth. Because of limited space, not all the returning teachers are able to attend. The seminar's teacher-leaders are hoping to be able to offer a follow-up multi-day program for past participants, where teachers can share their experiences and ideas and expand and deepen their pedagogy.

For more information about The Olga Lengyel Institute for Holocaust Studies and Human Rights, please see www.TOLInstitute.org and the TOLI Facebook page. For information about the summer institute, contact leslielawner@gmail.com.

Different

By Callia Jesurun,
Age 9

Different

When I hear "different",
I think about addition and subtraction,
weeds and flowers,
Birds and bats

I think about how
The Nazis killed Jews because
They were different

About how African Americans
Were slaves until president Lincoln
Freed them in 1863 because they
Were different

Even then they were
Treated unfairly because
They were different

About how women weren't
Allowed to vote 'til 1919 because
They were different

And how terrorists
murder Muslims and people
with other faiths because they are different

About how poachers
Kill rhinos and other animals that will
earn them more
Because they look
Different

How some people only
Harm out of fear, they
Fear what they don't
Know

They fear difference,
But to me, the best thing
You can be
Is different

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Mazal Tov to Vivian Skadron

Vivian Skadron (right) received the Mimi Efroyimson Life of Leadership Award from the honor's namesake on June 4 at the annual meeting of the Jewish Federation of New Mexico. Vivian is on the board of the Jewish Community Foundation where she champions young student leaders. Under her direction, the Jewish Lecture Series was established at the University of New Mexico. In addition to her community leadership, she is also a competitive swimmer who has swum in the National Senior Games.

