



# **Annual Report West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education for 2009**

Presented to:

The Honorable Joe Manchin III, Governor  
State of West Virginia

The Honorable Members, West Virginia Senate  
The Honorable Members, West Virginia House of  
Delegates & the WV Department of Education

The West Virginia Holocaust Education Commission is dedicated to the study and remembrance of the Holocaust (Shoah) via accurate and meaningful education, documentation and the raising of awareness of the consequences of prejudice, bias and discrimination, as a means of reducing hatred and to engender good will among all peoples.

Dr. Edith Rechter Levy, survivor and founding force for the WVCHE, was honored in the Decision Makers Program October 2009. Interview can be viewed at:

[http://www.boomboxradio.net/boombox/PlayerSetup/Players/WOWKTVPlayer.aspx?FileId=219178\\_wowktv](http://www.boomboxradio.net/boombox/PlayerSetup/Players/WOWKTVPlayer.aspx?FileId=219178_wowktv)

Members of the WVCHE hold Dr. Levy in great respect and work to support her vision of Holocaust Education that was innovative as she founded and directed the commission. Dr. Levy no longer makes trips to schools but still talks to students and teachers by using Skype. Today with increased scholarly research and the demise of many who personally experienced a portion of its events and their consequences, Holocaust Education is being carefully reexamined and defined. Recently no lesser a world leaders than Kofi Annan, the former Sec. General of the UN, and Aleksander Kwasniewski, past president of Poland, have expressed strong support for the need for Holocaust Education and for its potential to teach youth and society about interactions that are appropriate both among people and nations. Quoting from an editorial by Aleksander Kwasniewski published on June 28, 2010 in the International Herald Tribune <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/29/opinion/29iht-edcounter.html?ref=global>

are 7 statements summarizing commonly held and research supported benefits from Holocaust Education that cross national boundaries:

1. Born in the early 1990s, they tend to view World War II as irrelevant to their everyday lives. Our job is to demonstrate how historical events, including the Holocaust, are unique opportunities to understand the world today.
2. Superficial Holocaust education leaves no lasting impact. It will not overcome forces of racism and intolerance, or solve enduring social problems. Effective Holocaust education, focusing on the human story within the facts of history, does, however, foster greater understanding of the social processes that can lead to genocide.
3. Effective Holocaust education, focusing on the human story within the facts of history, does, however, foster greater

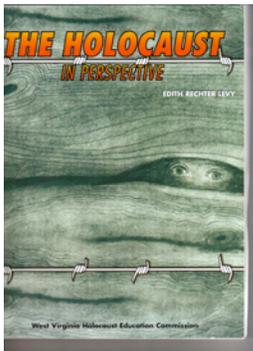
- understanding of the social processes that can lead to genocide.
4. Genuine, deep, long-term study of the Holocaust has the power to sensitize people, raise awareness of the other, help identify the preliminary warning signs of genocide, and put the brakes in place.
  5. Holocaust education is a relatively recent phenomenon, and the number of primary and secondary school students around the world actually engaged in it is still relatively limited.
  6. Without being anchored in the defining context of the Holocaust, haphazard exposure to a mélange of disparate conflicts, ethnic cleansings and other atrocities serves only to blur understanding and learning.
  7. While the Holocaust was a unique event, targeting the Jews in particular, its nature lends it universal meaning.... Paradoxically, its study contains and provides the very tools for rebuilding that foundation.

A major charge for the WVCHE from its beginning was to create a research based, usable curriculum for the next generation and to prepare teachers to use this curriculum with West Virginia students and remembering the victims of the Holocaust in appropriate ways. The textbook, **THE HOLOCAUST IN PERSPECTIVE** by Dr. Levy, and its teachers guide was written and has been widely distributed to schools in West Virginia.

**THE HOLOCAUST IN PERSPECTIVE** (pp. 249, including the appendix) has been included in the West Virginia Department of Education supplemental materials catalog as the recommended text for Holocaust studies. It is used as the basis for commission-sponsored seminars involving teachers, scholars, and the public. The text has been recommended by Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel, the Simon Wiesenthal Center of Tolerance of Los Angeles and is also sold at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

Based on the West Virginia Board of Education members' recommendation in 2002 the commission members have had as a major goal ensuring that each middle school student in the state gain access to the text. The text provides student opportunities for sensitization, development of critical and thoughtful analysis, and engenders good human relations. Accomplishing this in the middle school will serve as a base for the more in-depth study of the Holocaust at the high school level. Because the book has a thoroughly

researched historical background, many high school teachers have also use the text to supplement to their more general textbooks.



To date, THE HOLOCAUST IN PERSPECTIVE has been distributed to teachers in more than 31 WV counties upon their request. Much still remains to be done to complete the commission's goal to "get the textbook into the hands of students" as recommended by the members of the State Board of Education at a meeting in 2002. New teachers still need to be made a ware of the book and its important role. Today the first printing has been distributed largely in West Virginia, but also has been sold to school in many other states. This unique book has also been translated into Japanese where it assists teachers and youth as they learn about this period of history. Dr. Levy created an educational PowerPoint on a CD as a supplement for the book that adds depth and greater sensitization to THE HOLOCAUST IN PERSPECTIVE through its original photographs and copies of documents from the Holocaust period. This CD is an autobiographical account of the childhood experiences of its creator, Dr. Edith Rechter Levy.

Presently the book is under revision for a second edition. It is planned to combine the CD and book into a multi-media package. Materials easily available through the Internet will be eliminated from the book and new references will be added. Lessons in the teacher's guild will be revised and new lessons added. The commission has designated some of its limited funds in reserve to this process. However, additional funds to produce and distribute a professional set of materials are needed.

### **Library Dedication:**

A long-term projected successfully completed this year was the establishment of a library collection. As Dr. Levy met with survivors and leaders in Holocaust Education, she recognized the necessity for West Virginia to have a high quality library of Holocaust related references to assure that the public and teachers could gain access to information and scholarship on the growing knowledge concerning the Holocaust. At one meeting in 1999 Dr. Levy met Ken Schoen, owner of a book store in Massachusetts, who after learning that Dr. Levy only had her own person funds to assist her efforts in educating people about the Holocaust, gave her a number of books and continued to regularly provide her with additional books for as long as he remained in business. The growing collection was housed in the office of the WVCHE and catalogued by volunteers from the Morgantown, WV library.



On March 7, 2010, a beautiful Sunday afternoon, people from throughout West Virginia gathered at the Morgantown Public Library for the official opening of the special collection over 500 scholarly books all devoted to the Holocaust. The collection is named for Dr. Levy's father, J. D. Rechter, who died during the Holocaust while his

immediate family survived in hiding in Belgium. The opening of the collection fulfilled one of the major priorities of the commission that was headed by Dr. Levy for so many years. It was largely through the efforts of Dr. Levy that the collection over the years was obtained. Rabbi David Levy, speaking for his family, indicated their intended plan to add to the collection over time so that it will continue to make available the very best books about the Holocaust for use by the citizens of West Virginia. The availability of the collection will be publicized.



### **Teacher Education:**

The online Holocaust Education course for teachers and teacher candidates by Dr. Haas through the College of Human Resources and Education at West Virginia University those enrolled are working on advanced degrees or initial certification as graduate students. Attending such classes or workshops and teaching K-12 students about the Holocaust are requirements for teachers to be eligible to apply to attend teacher workshops at the USHMM. This year the course was approved by the university's faculty senate procedures and became the regular course: C& 615.

On October 26, 2009 Dr. M. E. Haas and Dr. R. A. Waterson from West Virginia University presented a session at the three day Ethel Lefrak Holocaust Education Conference: Holocaust Education in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Their presentation was based on findings from the summer teachers' workshop they conducted the previous year at WVU funded by the WV Humanities Council in conjunction with the WV CHE and the College of Human Resources and Education. Drs. Haas and Robertson were asked to extend the presentation into a formal paper to be published in the proceedings of the conference and distributed by the National Catholic Center for Holocaust Education at Seton Hill University sponsor for the conference.

#### Future Plans:

The WVCHE will continue to work with the WV Department of Education to distribute high quality educational materials and make teachers aware of resources and lessons for teaching the Holocaust and genocide to school age youth throughout the state. The online course at WVU will be offered each summer. Teacher workshops will be provided for teachers as funding becomes available.

#### **Arts and writing contest:**

The annual arts and writing contest is open to all interested students in schools and home schooled in grades 5-12. Entries must present the Holocaust through a perspective that illustrates their understanding of this year's theme. This year the bad weather caused students to miss many days of school negatively impacted the participation in the contest. Many teachers indicated that they did not have time to include instruction about the Holocaust or to work with students to encourage them to create projects. Awards for this year's contest will be given in the fall again because of weather delays that would normally have allowed for a timely conducting of the contest.

A different theme is chosen every year for this activity. This allows students to enter the contest several years in succession, and thereby enlarge their knowledge, scope of research, and sensitization to the human aspect of this educational experience and its correlation to present-day genocides. In that sense, the lessons of the Holocaust are lessons in citizenship and character development, among others.

Yearly expenses for this project amounts to well over \$3,000.00. This does not include volunteer participation, or the honorarium for a guest speaker.

#### Future Plans:

The Arts and Writing contest will continue to be an activity that supports teachers and students by providing a forum for rewarding efforts to teach and learn about the Holocaust. This is a costly program and improving it will require additional funds. Our improvement goals include providing resources and lesson ideas to help teachers approach the theme of the year and to provide short yearly workshop to assist teachers on the theme. We hope future exhibits might coincide with the yearly themes and travel throughout the state. We plan to provide a prize for an overall outstanding entry each year and recognition of one outstanding teacher each year with a trip to the USHMM. This will be added when additional funding is obtained.

#### **Programs:**

This year the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education in cooperation with the Unitarian Universalist Churches in Charleston and Morgantown the commission arranged for the screening of the film Journey to

Freedom. Teachers were invited to attend the workshop and the screening. The program was open to the public and the weather cooperated.

West Virginia Commission on  
Holocaust Education  
Presents the Documentary:

## The Journey to Freedom

The caring and inspiring story of Martha and Waitstill Sharp—American Unitarian Universalists—who left their own family and risked their own lives to save Europeans from the Nazis. Honored in 2006 as only the 2nd and 3rd Americans recognized as RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS.

**When: Wednesday, March 3rd, 2010**  
**Times:**  
4:30 pm Teacher Workshop  
5:30 pm Light Refreshments  
6:30 pm Documentary

**Where:**  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
520 Kanawha Blvd  
Charleston, WV 25302

**SPONSORS:**  
West Virginia  
Commission on  
Holocaust Education



Unitarian  
Universalist  
Congregation



UNITARIAN  
SERVICE COMMITTEE



UUSC

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee Chalice. The one on the left is the symbol used during World War II and the chalice on the right is the one used currently.

For More Information About Event Contact:  
Unitarian Universalist Congregation  
Phone: 304-345-5042 Web: uscharlestonwv.org  
Email: unitarians@verizon.net  
For More Information on the Sharps:  
www.ushmm.org; www.harvardsquarelibrary.org/unitarians; www.uuswodd.org

This film tells the story of Martha and Waitstill Sharp two of the three Americans who have been honored as Righteous Among the Nations. On March 3<sup>rd</sup> prior to the showing in Charleston a workshop for teachers was also presented to assist the teachers of the region in teaching about the Holocaust and those people who helped the Jews. The USHMM provided a guest speaker who is one of their fellows researching the role of the Catholic nuns in helping Jews in Germany. She played a major role in the workshop. In the evening she introduced the

film by explaining the various challenges people who wanted to help faced. She also helped to lead the discussion of questions following the viewing.



This film was generously provided by Artemis Joursky III, grandson of the Sharps whose research was responsible for their recognition as Righteous Gentiles and is the moving force for making this film that encourages others to follow in the path of his caring grandparents in today's world. In Morgantown the small Unitarian Universalist church was filled with community members and students from WVU including several very interested students from Saudi Arabia whose exposure to the Holocaust had been very little and who came to increase their knowledge about the Holocaust. Dr. Haas had the opportunity to talk to these young men following the program and answered some of their questions and directed them to good resources they might use on the Internet to assist their learning. Adding to the discussion about the Holocaust by Dr. Haas during the program were several members of the congregation who had lived in Germany and a member of the congregation who was a personal friend of the Sharp

family. People attending both of the presentations were interested in learning about the challenges and efforts that individuals and groups made to assist Jews and especially the Jewish children. This chapter of the Holocaust often goes unrecognized. Knowledge of the behaviors of the righteous needs to be included as it illustrates the actions people in today's world might need to take to prevent the loss of human rights and to possibly preventing future genocides. The film ends with a statement by the director of Yad Vashem who explained that their purpose is not to remember only the negative things associated with the Holocaust, but the positive as well.

#### Future plans:

It is hoped that each year the WVCHE working with groups and institutions throughout the state will be able to provide at least one exhibit of special program. Programs and exhibits usually cost and often require transportation and insurance costs as well. These will be open to the public and teachers in the area will be encouraged to bring their students to these events. Attempt will be made when possible and appropriate to provide materials or information to teachers so that they can prepare students to attend and learn from programs and exhibits.

#### Higher Education:

A survey of the state universities was conducted in the fall of 2009 to learn what courses are being taught at universities and what additional opportunities are being made available to students and the public concerning the Holocaust. The letter with the survey also indicated that the WVCHE has resources and is willing to assist universities and teachers in obtaining program and class resources. Five universities responded to the survey. Courses offered include both history and literature based courses.

#### Remembrance:



Students at WVU annually remembered victims of the Holocaust in conjunctions with a program from Yad Vashem and B'nai B'rith "Unto Each Person there is a Name." The first reader of names was WVU President Clements who was joined throughout the day and night by students and faculty and community members who for 24 hours gather to hear and read the names and ages of victims of the Holocaust and offer prayers for the victims many of whom had no friends or family members to remember their lives.

An interfaith service for Yom haShoah was conducted in Morgantown. In Wheeling the greater community was invited to take part in the service at Temple Shalom where a film about the rescue of Jews was shown following the service. Other Jewish communities also had services of remembrances. The WVCHE encourages such services and encourages the greater community to take part in this type of remembrance. It is pleased to share sample services with those in interested in conducting such services and in providing or recommending good films that might be used in conjunction with remembrances.



***Respectfully Submitted for the present members of the West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education:***

- Mary Elizabeth Haas, Chairperson, *Morgantown*
- Jenny Phillips, West Virginia State Board of Education, *Elkins*
- Edith Rechter Levy, Chairperson Emerita, *Morgantown*
- Michel Green, West Virginia State Board of Education, *Morgantown*
- The Honorable Delegate Ron Fragale, Member of the House, *Clarksburg*
- Theresa McAbee (educator), Lewis County
- Brenda Williams (educator),
- Reverend Julia Morrison, Secretary (citizen)
- Regina Scotchie, Social Studies coordinator (West Virginia Department of Education), *Charleston*
- Paul Sheridan, (Senior Assistant Attorney General), *Charleston*

Appendix:

**West Virginia Commission on Holocaust Education**  
**Minimal Budget needs 2011**  
 (based on past expenses)

**A. Essential operating**

Office and Library

Rent	\$6,000
Insurance	700
Dues (AHO)	250
Telephone/Fax	2,000
Computer supplies/Internet	500
Postage/shipping	1,500
Miscellaneous supplies	2,000
Printing/Photo copying	<u>1,500</u>
	\$14,450
Miscellaneous 10%	<u>1,445</u>
	<i>\$15,895</i>

Salaries

Executive Director – part time	\$25,000
Fringe benefits	5,000
Staff – part –time	22,000
Secretary @ \$11.00 hour	
Librarian	
Grant Writer (may receive % of grant)	
Legal Representation, CPA	
	<i>\$52,000</i>

**B. Educational programs**

1. Classroom focus:

a. Teacher Workshops (Possible partial Grant funding)

- 1) Daylong- Arts & Writing, Special Topics @\$1,500 each
- 2) Week or 2 weeks intensive training (range- \$57,000-\$70,000)

b. Arts and Writing contest (Possible Partial Donation ) 3,500

Includes: promotion and prizes, speaker

c. One Teacher travel award (per year \$2,000)

d. Supplies for free distribution to teachers &

Lending Trunks of materials (shipping/insurance) 10,000

There will be an additional cost for creating trunks

2. Schools and General Public

- a. Exhibits (rental, transportation, insurance, security) 12,000
- b. Library purchases (texts, DVDs, etc) 2,000
- c. Plays, musicals, stage performances 5,000
- d. Commemorative programs (speakers/films) 5,000
- e. Speakers (fees and travel) 7,000

minimal programming costs *\$44,500*

**TOTAL** Conservative estimate per year excluding grants **\$112,395**