



Gratz Insider, November 2012 - Story Continuation

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Gratz Presents The Esther Tuzman Memorial Holocaust Teach-In

It “opened my eyes to much I did not know,” said one participant about the teach-in—an understandable reaction given the sheer breadth of the event’s agenda. The teach-in included a host of presenters from divergent backgrounds, ranging from the youngest known survivor of Auschwitz to the grandson of a former Nazi. The presenters came from multiple disciplines and areas of expertise. And the result was a program that offered participants the opportunity to see the Holocaust through different lenses.

The keynote speaker, for example, was renowned psychiatrist and Holocaust scholar Dr. Robert Jay Lifton. During his talk, Lifton created a portrait of the genocidal mind developed from studies that he had conducted throughout his career, including one on Nazi doctors. “What the Nazis did was evil,” said Lifton, “and I was looking for psychological and historical conditions conducive to this evil.”

The lawyers in the crowd had the opportunity to consider relevant legal issues during two breakout sessions at the teach-in. One session focused on the concept of genocide, explaining how this word was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a lawyer and Polish Jew, who was largely responsible for the formal adoption of the term genocide in international law. The other session focused on a bill that has been introduced in the Pennsylvania legislature to mandate Holocaust education in public schools throughout the Commonwealth.

For the teachers, who represented schools from across the region, the teach-in was an educational bonanza. They had opportunities to expand their background knowledge and to network with other teachers to gather new ideas for the classroom. However, they were also reminded of their special responsibility in teaching future generations about the lessons of the Holocaust. Taking a moment to specifically address the teachers, Marty Tuzman said, “You will repeat these stories to other incredulous ears. You will repeat them so no one can deny them.”

Although the November 4th program was the fifth Holocaust Teach-In organized by Gratz and the second involving the generous support of the Tuzman Family, it was the first to include a survivor from another incidence of genocide, a refugee from Sudan. The teach-in offered a breakout session on the Armenian genocide as well.

This expanded focus of the Holocaust Teach-In is consistent with the evolution of Holocaust studies at Gratz generally. What began ten years ago as a certificate program in Holocaust studies is now a graduate certificate or master's degree program in Holocaust and genocide studies. Since the approval of the online master's in December of 2011, the number of students enrolled in graduate Holocaust and genocide studies programs at Gratz has jumped from 7 to 45.

The importance of such programs was affirmed by compelling comments made by educators at the close of the Holocaust Teach-In. In completing the evaluation form, one teacher wrote, "I will incorporate genocide into my teaching." Another said, "I will transfer this experience to the classroom." Such comments answer the call made by Marty Tuzman in his introductory remarks: "Today we will learn so that tomorrow we will teach."