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**STRASSLER CENTER FOR HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE
STUDIES AT CLARK UNIVERSITY**

Founding the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies: Programs and Place

Founded in 1996 as an institute without walls, the Center promptly initiated an interdisciplinary undergraduate program in Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Shelly Tenenbaum, Professor of Sociology and a participating faculty member of the Center, took on the chairship and, under her leadership, a rigorous, carefully structured undergraduate program was organized and accepted by the University governing bodies. In this interdisciplinary program, undergraduates study the Holocaust and genocides around the globe to enhance their understanding of the society from which they come, the society in which they live, and the society to which they currently are giving shape. They learn about ethnicity, geography and genocide; about the hot violence of mass murder and the cold violence of the modern bureaucratic systems of death; and about suffering and adaptation to suffering. They learn about and study the process by which societies disintegrated step by step, and how ordinary men, women, and children both participated in and were affected by this disintegration. Now taught by seventeen professors in seven different departments, the undergraduate program offers over thirty courses.

A doctoral program followed (September 1998) with the admission of three candidates from more than a hundred who made inquiry. Clearly: interest abounded, and the move to graduate education sent a strong signal to colleges and universities across North America about the importance of this emerging field. The aim of the doctoral program was, and has remained, to train scholars dedicated to research and teaching in the academic arena (colleges and

universities), and to train scholars dedicated to applied research and education in the public- realm (government as well as NGOs; museums and other non-profit organizations).

The growth of these programs called for an institutional home. Happily, Julian Bonder, a gifted architect with thoughtful expertise in the design of buildings and memorials dedicated to a range of violent assaults on different peoples, had recently moved to Boston from his native Argentina. He proposed to renovate a turn-of-the-century clapboard villa to house the Center, and to build a zinc-clad modern addition to accommodate a burgeoning library collection. Bonder's buildings were ready for occupancy in November 1999. He won seven architectural awards for his work. The Center gained more: the opening of Lasry House, the new and permanent home of the Center, proved foundational. For the first time ever, anywhere in the world, a degree-granting Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies now existed, physically, on the map. The academic landscape had changed. Form follows function, and Lasry House reflected the establishment of an enduring intellectual home for Holocaust history and genocide studies as a field in its own right.

Center and Program Faculty

Three permanent professorships constitute the core faculty of the Center. In addition, participating faculty -- currently one visiting professor as well as seventeen professors from seven different departments -- teach HGS courses, mentor graduate students, and serve on committees. The engagement of all faculty shapes the Center's intellectual community and interdisciplinary approach.

Taner Akçam holds the Kaloosdian Mugar Professorship in Armenian Genocide Studies. An expert in the history of political violence and torture in late Ottoman and early Republican Turkey, he has recently focused his attention on Turkish nationalism and violence carried out against minority groups. Among these groups, the genocide perpetrated against the Armenians is most widely recognized and continues to be a contested political issue in the international arena. Professor Akçam is frequently asked by U.S. and international media to comment on political developments between Turkey and Armenia. His research on Ottoman persecution of different ethnic populations expands the scope of genocide studies scholarship. According to Professor Akçam, it is imperative to address historic wrongs in order to build a peaceful future and scholarship is a necessary first step in that process.

Founding Director and Rose Professor Debórah Dwork is best known for her scholarship on Jews during the Holocaust; her pioneering study on Jewish children remains a milestone in the field. With her co-author Robert Jan van Pelt, she has studied the Holocaust through the lens of Auschwitz; by writing a history that analyzed the Judeocide in relation to World War II and wove together the four strands of victim, perpetrator, rescuer, and bystander; and from the perspective of those who fled, the refugees. As director of the Strassler Center, she is responsible for envisioning its mission and guiding its growth and development. And she is a staunch educator, mentoring doctoral students and junior colleagues, and a leader in the field of teacher education about the Holocaust.

Strassler Professor of Holocaust History, Thomas Kühne, is a scholar of modern European and German history, producing seminal work in the completely distinct subfields of the Wilhelmine Reich and 20th century German history. He is credited by his peers with having founded (together with his colleague Benjamin Ziemann) an entirely new field of historical research: a new military history that takes experience, gender, and subjectivity seriously. And his most recent works (in German) on comradeship between German soldiers during World War II and on community bonding among gentile Germans during the Third Reich (in English) draw upon anthropology, sociology, and psychology as they break new ground on persistently vexing questions about social identity and mass murder. Professor Kühne's research focus has recently broadened to embrace issues of Holocaust memory and representation.

Thanks to a gift of a Visiting Professorship, Akcam, Dwork, and Kühne were joined by Bob Melson for a couple of years and now by Jens Meierhenrich. Thanks to a Fulbright Fellowship, Cecilie Stokholm Banke joined them, too, for fall term 2010. Generous with their scholarship and their time, each powered the doctoral program in fresh directions. Colleagues in other departments - Johanna Vollhardt and Jaan Valsiner in the Psychology Department; Olga Litvak in History - take similarly leading roles in mentoring doctoral students.

Indeed, the exigency of genocidal situations continuing to unfold - and Valsiner and Vollhardt's expertise -- prompted the Center to take a fresh approach: the psychology of genocide. Joining forces with Clark's distinguished Psychology Department, the Center launched an interdisciplinary psychology of genocide track in fall 2008. The scope of the doctoral program thus broadened to pursue a new way of understanding genocide.

Doctoral Program

The Strassler Center celebrated its first decade at the forefront of education and training of Holocaust and genocide scholars in the academic year 2008-2009. Doctoral students entered in 1998 and five years later Clark University granted the first Ph.D. degrees specifically in Holocaust history. From that initial class of three students, the Center has developed a robust program to which admission is highly competitive and draws upon a superior and broadly international applicant pool. A growing number of faculty members mentor students in a range of disciplines and across departmental divides. Ten years after establishing doctoral study, the program has matured into a community of scholars who foster the growth and development of genocide studies as a dynamic discipline.

Admission to the doctoral program remains highly selective. Typically, 10 percent of those who apply are admitted and nearly all choose to attend. A rise in international interest has yielded applicants from as far afield as China, South America, and Africa. The twenty-two doctoral students (in total, all stages) enrolled in the program in the academic year 2009-10 come to the Center from Austria, Canada, Germany, Israel, Lebanon, Poland, Romania, Switzerland, and Ukraine.

The doctoral program at the Strassler Center is extremely intensive. Students are expected to complete their degrees in five years and each student is supported with a stipend and research bursary for that period. Doctoral candidates take courses and are active at the Center during the first two years of the program. Faculty and students have offices in Lasry House and enjoy an ever-growing (now 8,000-volume) multi-disciplinary library of secondary scholarship. Students complete a comprehensive range of courses in historiography, comparative genocide analysis, and theories of intervention and prevention. They also learn to conduct independent research. In the summer months, students are expected to gain language proficiency related to their area of research and to pursue original scholarship at research facilities at home or abroad. Students sit oral comprehensive exams and defend their dissertation proposals in the third year. They then turn to fulltime field research and writing.

The doctoral program prepares students to become historians whose expertise will be crucial to Holocaust and genocide museums and memorials; they will pursue new scholarship that will advance the field and enhance the education of teachers,

students, and the public. Center graduates educate teachers who will go on to introduce Holocaust and genocide studies to countless students through classroom programs around the United States and in the countries to which they return after graduation. A cadre of doctoral students trained in comparative genocide studies will form a deeply educated professional class engaged in scholarship that will inform crucial decision making. These students look to careers in government and non-government positions, formulating and implementing international and human rights policies and educational programs.

The future of Holocaust and genocide research is reflected in the range of topics selected as doctoral projects. Training her eye on the Jews of Czernowitz, Natalya Lazar studies interethnic relations in Bukovina, while Raz Segal investigates the Jewish communities in their interethnic context of sub-Carpathian Rus. Stefan Ionescu adds to the mix with his scrutiny of ethno-nationalism in Romania during the Holocaust years. Alexis Herr uses the deportation camp Fossoli di Carpi as prism to analyze the history and memory of the Holocaust in Italy. Emily Dabney, by contrast, takes a transnational approach, exploring forced labor camps in North Africa. Elizabeth Anthony focuses on survivors who returned to Vienna, while Joanna Sliwa examines the daily lives of children of the Kraków ghetto. Innovative approaches to Holocaust research abound. Post-Holocaust memory is the focus of Jody Manning's studies of Auschwitz and Dachau. Social psychology and genocide studies converge in Cristina Andriani's work on the aftermath of Holocaust trauma. Inspired by successful Holocaust research on rescue, Khatchig Mouradian will investigate rescue efforts during the Armenian genocide.

The Center's intellectual environment is both intimate and lively. The uniquely supportive scholarly culture brings, in one student's words, "varied perspectives with different accents" which yields "discussions that are complex, diverse, and fruitful." Such a setting was essential to mounting the first-ever International Graduate Students' Conference on Holocaust and Genocide Studies, held in April 2009 and co-sponsored with the Center's partner institution, the Danish Institute for International Studies. Collectively envisioned by the Center's graduate students, the conference provided a forum for students to present original research to their peers and invited scholars. A call for papers yielded over 130 proposals, of which 55 were selected. The student organizers achieved their goal: to forge strong scholarly ties among a far-flung cohort - a cadre of professionals who will take the field in new directions in the decades to come. The success of the first doctoral student conference led to a unanimous decision to offer such an international conference tri-annually. By sponsoring regular doctoral student

conferences, the students themselves assume a leadership role in fostering a robust international community of genocide scholars in the future.

Beyond the Walls

Just as the Center takes seriously the teaching of graduate and undergraduate students, it also takes seriously the education of the public and public service. To that end, Center faculty participate in numerous teacher education programs, offer their expertise on a whole range of projects, and provide an educated voice in the public arena on issues from the recent Protocols between Turkey and Armenia to the elevation of Pius XII to "revered" status. The Center, in short, reaches out and invites in, too, by hosting a lecture series free and open to the public and by hosting conferences and symposia. These have brought many exciting Holocaust and genocide scholars to the Center and will continue to do so going forward. In April 2010, Taner Akçam will host a three-day workshop, *The State of the Art of Armenian Genocide Research: Historiography, Sources, and Future Directions*. The Strassler Center, in partnership with the University of Minnesota and the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, will assemble leading scholars from around the world to discuss the current state of Armenian genocide research, and their findings may well be significant to current political developments.

A combination of outrage and compassion leads many to ask what can be done to prevent genocide. The complexity of these conflicts defies simple solutions. Grounded in superior understanding of history, geopolitics, international law, and comparative cases, government and NGO responses have a hope of success. Center students and faculty, recognizing that it is imperative to address the threat of genocidal violence and the record of historic genocides in order to build a peaceful future, seek to provide the scholarship upon which that success rests.