

# Martin-Springer Institute

## Global Engagement Through Holocaust Awareness

### 2022-2023: YEAR IN REVIEW

#### LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

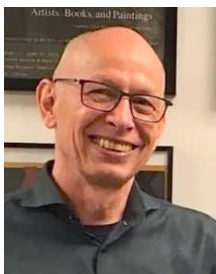
It is easy to write a *jeremiad* about the global situation: an unprovoked war in Europe, heat waves in Arizona and worldwide, a steadily growing number of people on the move to escape unbearable conditions, the rise of illiberal democracies, the slippery slope from violent rhetoric to violent hate acts, communities under attack for who they are, including a sharp increase of antisemitism, a growing discrepancy between rich and poor, the dismantling of women's rights and public education – and this is only a short list.

There are times when we don't know how to prioritize among the most urgent needs. Centers like the Martin-Springer Institute (MSI) play an important role in assisting students and the community to raise awareness but also to organize our thinking and encourage active responses to the various crises we are facing.

Within our means, MSI is doing as much as we can. But we can also do better. The latter is not just an issue of financial stability, but also a question of identifying new venues to counteract the perils of today.

We invite you to become a partner in this important mission and responsibility. Assist us with your vision, practical ideas, and, wherever possible, financial support.

Respectfully,



Björn Krondorfer, Regents' Professor  
Director, Martin-Springer Institute  
& Endowed Professor of Religious Studies

**NAU** NORTHERN ARIZONA  
UNIVERSITY

Martin-Springer Institute

#### New Post-Doc



We welcome our fourth post-doctoral scholar, Pedro J. Gonzalez Corona, who will join MSI and the NAU community in August 2023.

Pedro received his PhD in 2019 and has been a Research Fellow at the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy. He previously worked with the Ackerman Center for Holocaust Studies in Texas, teaching courses on the Holocaust, human rights, Latin American, and Mexican history. Fellowships include the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy and the Institute for the Study of Human Rights at Columbia University.

Thanks to our generous donors (Jeanette Garretty Reinhard and Eli Reinhard as well as the Molly Blank Fund), we are able to continue offering this opportunity for highly qualified post-doctoral scholars to work on their research and with our students at NAU. Pedro's current research on forced disappearances and Mexican antisemitism aligns well with NAU's new Hispanic Serving Institution designation.

*The memory of catastrophe can be multidirectional, inviting people to empathize; but it can also be revolutionary, shattering the silence of the present. That is why I am honored by the opportunity to be the Postdoctoral Scholar at MSI, a place where teaching and researching will connect us with the past while paying tribute to those who greatly suffered.*

Pedro J. Gonzalez Corona,  
MSI Post-Doctoral Scholar

#### New Student Member for the MSI-AC



Alyssa Icke (Anthropology and Museum Studies) joined the MSI-Advisory Council as a new student member. Alyssa was part of the student team designing the exhibition on *Gino Parin and the Holocaust*. She wrote: "I wanted to do something with MSI because I am really interested in learning about curation and exhibit design and also about Jewish history."

# PEOPLE

## MEET OUR NEW HOLOCAUST EDUCATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR



Through a generous grant by the Molly Blank Fund, we were able to establish a new staff position at MSI for three years to support Arizona teachers. We are reaching out to school districts, especially in rural areas, to create support networks among teachers interested in Holocaust education and concerned about its future.

We welcome Robin LaCorte, who joined us in October 2022. Robin received her MA in World War II Studies from ASU.

*It is an honor to collaborate with Arizona teachers, who are dedicated to integrating Holocaust education into their curriculum. By preserving the memory of the Holocaust through education, we cultivate empathy and understanding as we strive towards building a more tolerant world.*

Robin LaCorte, Holocaust Education Program Coordinator

## This year, we are dedicating our “People” Page to our Work with Teachers in Arizona

### MSI TEACHER ADVISORY COUNCIL

Inspired by our intensive study tour of Holocaust-related sites in Poland and Germany in May 2022 with Arizona teachers, we created an Advisory Council with and for teachers to address urgent and long-term issues related to the teaching of the Holocaust and genocides in Arizona schools. The Martin-Springer Institute Teacher Advisory Council (MSI-TAC) started its work in the spring of 2023.

*With our ever-changing academic environment, MSI-TAC will play an important role in moving Holocaust studies forward in Arizona classrooms and ensuring that we are equipped to properly teach Holocaust and genocide studies.*

Ashley Crose, Saguaro High School, National Board Certified Teacher

*Pairing the wisdom of MSI with insights of classroom teachers strengthens Holocaust and genocide education in Arizona. Too few spaces exist where scholars, teachers, and educators can come together to develop creative solutions to real-school challenges.*

Dr. Lauren Lefty, Assistant Professor of History,  
and Director of Secondary History Education, NAU

### JUNE & JULY TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In June 2023, after a long hiatus due to COVID restrictions, we again offered our 2-day teacher training seminar, The Merrill and Rhoda Abeshaus Advanced Holocaust Educator’s Institute. It focused on the graphic novel *Maus* by Art Spiegelmann. Given the interest of teachers to include visual storytelling in their teaching as well as the troubling development of book banning, the first day introduced scholarly perspectives on *Maus* (presented by NAU faculty), and the second day focused on best practices for using graphic novels and literature in the classroom, facilitated by Carrie Olson.



In July 2023, we offered a new program for 12 educators with substantial experience of teaching about the Holocaust. The “Four-Day Intensive Institute” was structured around learning from each other’s best practices and adjusting one’s teaching to the local demands of each school. It was moderated by Kim Klett.



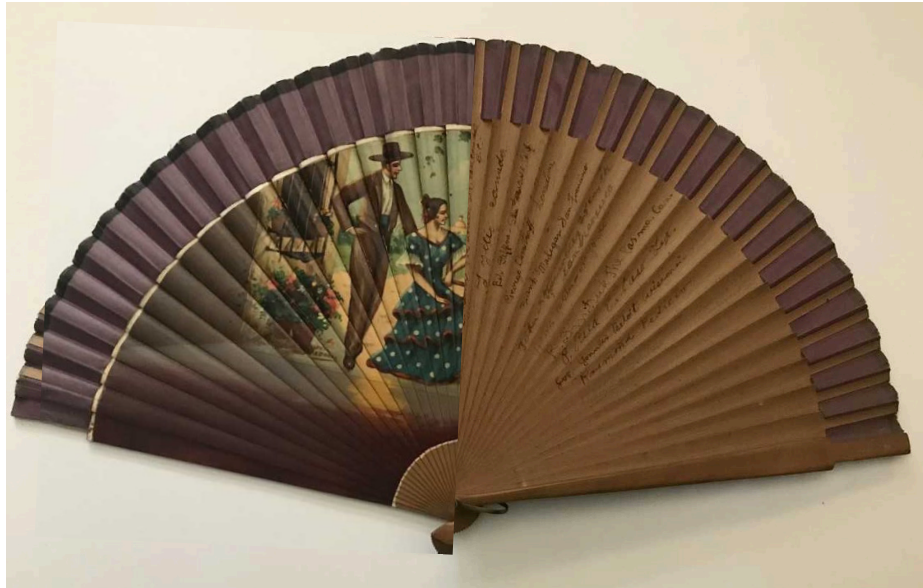
*Networking with educators passionate about Holocaust studies helped me to grow as an educator and historian through constructive dialogue among AZ teachers, scholars, and state officials. I am better prepared now to critically examine the Holocaust and genocides with my students.*

Scott Miller, Prescott High School



# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

## SPANISH CIVIL WAR PROJECT



With the inauguration of the website “Stories from the Spanish Civil War” in May 2023, we concluded the student-faculty research project on the Spanish Civil War. Please visit our website at [spanishcivilwarfan.org](http://spanishcivilwarfan.org).

The work on the project stretched over several semesters, with changing student teams from a variety of disciplines, mentored by Krondorfer and former NAU professor of History, Ana Varela. The project started when Phoenix resident Bernd Häber, who was born in East Berlin, introduced us to a fan from the Spanish Civil War, signed in

the fall of 1938 in Spain by 31 men from the United States, Canada, and the UK. They had volunteered to fight on the Republican side against General Franco’s nationalist uprising.

Our students used numerous resources, including archives in New York and Russia, to reconstruct the men’s stories and thus retell part of the history of the International Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. Since the lives of the Canadian and British signatories of the fan have not yet been researched, we are hoping to find partners at universities in the UK and Canada to complete the project in the future.

*What I thought to be a short project turned into delving into the lives of many International Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War. I am honored to have been part of this project.*

Kaleb Blackard, History and Museum Studies

*How little we knew about the Spanish Civil War! We focused on the personal stories of Americans who fought in that war with the hope to educate and engage the public.*

Alexander Furash, NAU 2023, Graduate Student in History, University of Chicago

*What an invaluable experience in research, writing, and collaboration. I will always cherish the friendships and mentorship at MSI’s Spanish Civil War project.*

Sarah Frey, NAU 2022, Project Coordinator at Institute of International Education

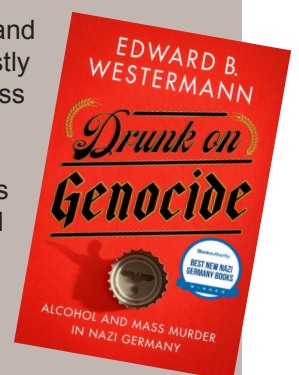
## ALCOHOL AND GENOCIDE

Edward Westermann, Regents’ Professor at Texas A&M University and historian of World War II and the Holocaust, presented a lecture on his new book, *Drunk on Genocide*. About 100 people (mostly students) attended the main lecture, listening attentively to how the use of alcohol facilitated the mass murder of Jews.

Westermann also conducted a session specifically for Active Duty and Military Veteran Students as well as a separate talk with the Graduate Association of Political Science at NAU’s College of Social and Behavioral Sciences College.

*SBS students listened to how important a role alcohol played in the social interactions of many perpetrators. Westermann’s research even opened a conversation among undergraduates about alcohol-driven events on campus today.*

Christopher Harrison, NAU faculty, Politics and International Affairs



# OUR YEAR IN REVIEW

## Lectures on the Holocaust



Our main speaker event, in honor of International Holocaust Remembrance Day (January 27), featured Michael Berenbaum. Berenbaum had been instrumental in the creation of the permanent exhibit at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and is an internationally renowned speaker on the Holocaust and antisemitism.



Thanks to a generous grant by the Gerald Rosenbluth Family Fund, MSI was able to arrange a lecture on “Contemporary Antisemitism” at Temple Solel in Paradise Valley (with help of the Phoenix Holocaust Association) before Berenbaum joined the NAU community for his talk on the “Holocaust in Today’s Political Climate.” He also met with a group of NAU students in a smaller setting.



Another talk on the Holocaust featured Christin Zühlke’s lecture on “Yiddish Testimonies of Sonderkommando Prisoners in Auschwitz-Birkenau.” Zühlke, a recent PhD, spoke in chilling detail about the dilemma of Jewish prisoners forced to work in the crematories and gas chambers of Auschwitz.

## SHORT NOTES

In September 2022 MSI co-sponsored an evening with Holocaust Survivor Esther Basch in partnership with Chabad of Flagstaff. We also cosponsored a film on Refugees with NAU’s Latin American Studies in April 2023.



**After the Holocaust: The U.S. Government's Role Regarding Survivors, Memory, and Genocide Prevention**

A Presentation by Ambassador Edward B. O'Donnell  
**October 17, 2022**  
**7:00 p.m.**  
 Liberal Arts building  
 Room 120  
 Free and open to the public  
 Contact: melissa.cohen@nau.edu for more information.

Ambassador O'Donnell retired from the career U.S. Foreign Service in 2007 after 29 years in Germany, Austria, Latin America, and other countries. He was a rotating Ambassador concentrating on Holocaust issues, and served in other positions in Washington, D.C. He is a member of the U.S. Liaison for Leadership, Diplomacy and National Security, and recently joined the Board of Genocide Awareness Week in Arizona.

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MSI sponsored the panel of speakers on *Home and Identity* in conjunction with the exhibition *25 Million Stitches* at the Coconino Center for the Arts in December 2022.



We were pleased to host Ambassador Edward B. O'Donnell for a community presentation in October 2022.



**WATCH THE MOVIE AND MEET DIRECTOR CHRISTINA ANTONAKOS-WALLACE**

Get in Berlin and New York. **FROM HERE** is a hopeful story of four young artists and activists from immigrant families redefining belonging in an era of rising nationalism.

Science & Health Bldg (#26) room 106  
 April 17 @ 4 PM

FROM HERE  
 A film by Christina Antonakos-Wallace

NAU NORTHERN ARIZONA UNIVERSITY

# WORKS IN PROGRESS

## GULAG AND THE HOLOCAUST



After a few years of planning, MSI hosted the international scholarly symposium at NAU, *Holocaust\*\*\*Gulag: Repressing, Rescuing, and Regulating Recalcitrant Legacies* (March 9-12, 2023).

Jointly organized by MSI and Dr. Katya Tolstaya (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam), with generous support by a family fund and the German Academic Exchange Service, the symposium addressed the difficult and painful histories of the Holocaust and the Gulag and probed how these (unresolved) long-lasting legacies intrude into contemporary society, culture, religion, and politics.

The invited scholars from diverse national backgrounds (Russian, U.S. American, Dutch, Polish, Canadian, German, Lithuanian) brought to the table their different disciplinary expertise, including History, Comparative Literature, Anthropology, Religious Studies, Sociology, Memory Studies, Cultural Studies, and Holocaust & Genocide Studies.

The symposium started with a public forum at NAU's Cline Library on the topic, "Lethal Legacies: The Soviet Gulag and the Nazi Genocide," conveying to the attending students and community the importance of these two lethal legacies of twentieth century Europe – and what they might teach us about our situation today. To this end, the symposium participants are now working on an edited volume, *Recalcitrant Legacies: Narratives of the Holocaust and the Soviet Gulag*.

*It was amazing and gratifying to see such an assemblage of domestic and international scholars converge at NAU at the request of MSI. It was an honor to get to know participants engaged with those difficult issues. We love to see MSI gaining an international reputation. What a terrific conference!*

Ron and Linda Borkan, community members and supporters of MSI

## UPCOMING 2023-2024

Several events are planned for the upcoming year. We would be happy to add your name to our email list.

In the fall, we are partnering with **Creative Flagstaff** on a **photography exhibit** about border/migration, and with **United Christian Ministry** on a commemoration of former NAU student **Kayla Mueller**, on the 10th anniversary of her abduction by ISIS. With NAU's **Criminology/Criminal Justice** department we are organizing a speaker event on **White Supremacy**. Our **Będzin exhibit** will travel to Arizona schools and we offer docent training for teachers and students. Also watch out for the **inaugural lecture** of our post-doc, Pedro Gonzalez.

In the spring, renowned **Holocaust historian Omer Bartov** will give a lecture at MSI (April). We may have a part in a planned performance of **Handel's Judas Maccabeus** by Flagstaff's **Master Chorale**. We will continue to host teacher trainings in June and are exploring options **with Cline Library** to bring the "**Americans and the Holocaust**" exhibit to NAU. Stay tuned.

# GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

## A New Space for the Martin-Springer Institute

Conversations and plans are underway to carve out a separate space for the Martin-Springer Institute. Given our local and regional reach and our growing national and international reputation, we are in desperate need – after more than twenty years of operation – for a recognizable space we can claim for ourselves.

As one friend of MSI put it, “You need to be able to open a door and know it is the Institute.” Another supporter said: “You need to create a place that is a home for students interested in these topics.” Expect more information in the coming months.

## A New Reproduction of the Będzin Exhibit

After ten years of heavy use, we are in desperate need of refreshing the traveling Będzin exhibit. It has become worn out and fragile and can no longer travel – just at a moment when we already have seven requests for exhibiting it in educational and public settings in the coming year. The estimated cost is \$10,000. If you are interested in helping us to redo the exhibit, please contact us.

## New Student Projects

We always need funds for our multi-semester student-faculty teams engaged in creating public humanities/public history projects, like the recently completed exhibition and podcast series on the artist Gino Parin in Italy during the Holocaust, or the digital exhibit on the signed 1938 fan from the Spanish Civil War.

We are currently exploring options for projects that could include stories of Arizona residents with Jewish family backgrounds in Frankfurt, Germany; a collection of photographs from the perspective of Nazi perpetrators; or, related to it, the problematics of displaying “toxic” objects from lethal legacies.

## Teacher Professional Development

We would again like to offer the “Four-Day Intensive Institute” for Arizona teachers (see page 2) in the summer of 2024 and need to raise \$15,000 to make it possible.

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Holocaust Education  
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Program Coordinator:  
Melissa Cohen  
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Post-Doctoral Scholar:  
Pedro J. Gonzalez Corona  
pedro.gonzalez@nau.edu

## YOU CAN HELP MAKE OUR PROGRAMS HAPPEN

For a tax deductible donation,  
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Northern Arizona University  
P.O. Box 5624  
Flagstaff, AZ 86011

For gifts of stocks, or to include  
us in your estate planning,  
please contact Liz Rock:  
Elizabeth.Rock@nau.edu  
928-814-8548

## Our website

- [in.nau.edu/martin-springer/](http://in.nau.edu/martin-springer/)

## Social Media

- [facebook.com/MSIatNAU](https://facebook.com/MSIatNAU)
- [instagram.com/nau\\_msi/?hl=en](https://instagram.com/nau_msi/?hl=en)
- [youtube.com/channel/UC2n640lx5ygSkHobTy-fhHcg](https://youtube.com/channel/UC2n640lx5ygSkHobTy-fhHcg)

## Exhibit links

- [spanishcivilwarfan.org/history-of-the-project/](http://spanishcivilwarfan.org/history-of-the-project/)
- [msi-worldwar2photos.org/](http://msi-worldwar2photos.org/)
- [flagstaffresilience.org/](http://flagstaffresilience.org/)

# Thank You to Our Donors: July 2022 to June 2023

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