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Brent Weisberg

Introduction

My first encounter with the Holocaust in a school setting was eighth grade in Mrs. Fergusson's humanities class at St. Mark's School of Texas. As I recall, we read the two editions of Art Spiegelman's *Maus*¹ and discussed the contents of the book. Only through conducting this research did I learn the extent to which my experience was similar to and different from the experiences of the millions of other children my age. Though the Holocaust is taught all over America, it is not mandated by the U.S. government nor every single state in the United States. The U.S. government has not passed legislation dealing with Holocaust education, though many states have.

As I began to research Holocaust education in America, however, I found that the story is more complicated than states' dictating to their teachers what gets taught about the Holocaust. Instead, the American classroom is a nexus of efforts by different educational actors, most prominently states and what I will call Holocaust education organizations. These organizations are not related to states but are instead educational or Jewish organizations that provide educational and curricular material to teachers germane to the

teaching of the Holocaust in American primary and secondary schools.

As such, I intend to provide an explanation as to the condition of Holocaust education in America by looking at the principal actors in American Holocaust education: states and Holocaust education organizations. By looking at state legislation and the websites of state Holocaust commissions as well as historical research conducted by educational historians, I intend to document the legislative history of Holocaust education in the states of Illinois, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Alaska. Moreover, from data collected by the Holocaust education organizations themselves and by research conducted on the state of Holocaust education within entities such as counties and states as well as, in one case, among Jewish day schools, I have found that it is evident that Holocaust education organizations play a significant role in the structure of Holocaust education in the United States. Together, these two kinds of actors construct a perceived mechanism of Holocaust education in America: states that pass legislation germane to Holocaust education provide a legal framework in which Holocaust education organizations operate by providing educational and curricular material to teachers and schools. In states where there is no Holocaust education legislation, the mechanism is more one-sided: Holocaust education organizations attempt to provide the same services in the absence of state assistance.

Anecdotes Related to Holocaust Education

Alongside and often abetting the push for Holocaust education have been anecdotal incidents, examples of ignorance, anti-Semitism, or both among groups and/or prominent leaders. Pro-Holocaust education individuals, politicians, and Holocaust education organizations utilize these incidents to galvanize support for legislation, increase the national consciousness toward Holocaust education, or demonstrate the inefficacy of the current structure of Holocaust education.

In the last two months, comments made by Trayon White Sr., a Washington, D.C. councilmember, alleged that the Rothschilds, a prominent Jewish banking family, and other wealthy Jews are responsible for manipulating the weather.² These comments echo one of many fringe conspiracy theories implicating the Rothschilds and Jews in general in controlling some aspect of world affairs and governance. In response to White, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) led White and his staffers through the museum on a tour that White inexplicably left halfway through. While on the tour, however, he argued with a rabbi, who acted as a tour guide for the day, over whether a group of Nazi stormtroopers arrayed around a German girl wearing a sign around her neck purposefully humiliating her for sleeping with a Jew was protecting her or facilitating her embarrassment. White said he believed from the photograph that they were “protecting her.”³ This incident demonstrates the centrality of institutions like the USHMM in coordinating Holocaust education, though this incident had little direct bearing on Holocaust curricula in American schools. Yet the fact that a tour of the USHMM was the default move for White after making his controversial comments underscores a quality the museum has in providing an official aegis for Holocaust education that few other American institutions can claim.

A similar incident took place a little over a year ago when an even more prominent public official, then-White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer, claimed after Syrian President Bashar al-Assad allegedly used chemical weapons on his own people that “someone as despicable as Hitler ... didn’t even sink to using chemical weapons.”⁴ These comments drew criticism from congressional Democrats and Jewish organizations across the country. A Democratic senator from Hawaii even tweeted that, for “bungling holocaust [sic] history,” Spicer does not deserve “the benefit of the doubt.”⁵

Holocaust education or the lack thereof consistently appears in the news, demonstrating a conscious effort by those who support it to point out how

much America lacks general Holocaust knowledge. For all the effort toward educating American schoolchildren about the Holocaust conducted by all parties I hope to outline and Holocaust education organizations which I plan to focus on in this paper, Americans remain lacking in their Holocaust knowledge. A recent study of 1,350 Americans by the Claims Conference, an organization that petitions Germany for reparations to Holocaust survivors to provide limited justice for survivors and to fund them in their old age, reported worrying statistics. It found that 31% of Americans and 41% of millennials “believe that substantially less than 6 million Jews were killed... during the Holocaust” and that 45% of Americans “cannot name a single [concentration camp or ghetto].” At the same time, however, the survey found that 93% of Americans “believe all students should learn about the Holocaust in school,” demonstrating an interest among Americans, despite their lack of knowledge, regarding the importance of Holocaust education, an interest that is gradually being met by states’ Holocaust education legislation.⁶

States’ Holocaust Education Legislation

This section focuses on the legislative history of Holocaust education in the states of Illinois, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Alaska. The aim of this section is to provide an overview of the frameworks different states provide (or, as in the case of Alaska, do not provide) to foster Holocaust education in their public schools. Holocaust legislation is significant in part because it officially defines the meaning of the event itself. Critical to understanding the legislation is an understanding of the arguments surrounding the formation and passage of the legislation, which I will relate in detailing the history of Illinois’s Holocaust education legislation.

The critical nature of properly defining the Holocaust relates to the controversy surrounding the definition of the Holocaust as it related to the foundation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. As Edward T. Linenthal relates in *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America’s*

Holocaust Museum, in the President's Commission on the Holocaust's (the precursor organization to the USHMM) Report to the President, one of the main points was that the Federal Government's definition of the Holocaust be specific in declaring that it was an event in which the "extermination of six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators" was the "central act" of the event. This was done because members of the council, including its chairman, Elie Wiesel, feared that alternate definitions would minimize the centrality of the Jewish experience of the event.⁷ Paul Warne Matthewson writes that, because the Federal Government failed to pass any form of Holocaust education legislation after setting the legislative foundation for the USHMM, the museum itself would "become a central arbiter of national message regarding the Holocaust" while the states would become the entities responsible for determining "the particular role that the Holocaust was to play in their public schools."⁸

In 1989, Illinois was the first state to pass Holocaust education legislation that mandated the teaching of the Holocaust in all public schools. Matthewson wrote in his history of Holocaust education in the state that support for Holocaust education in the state grew in response to local events like a 1978 Neo-Nazi march that took place in the town of Skokie, Illinois, a municipality with a large number of Holocaust survivors. Additionally, on the national level, the "Holocaust" TV miniseries had a great impact on Holocaust consciousness, with well over one hundred million estimated viewers. Fueled by popular interest, over the following decade, various Holocaust curricula, including the first iteration of *Facing History and Ourselves* (to be addressed below), came into being. These curricula represented the first attempts at implementing Holocaust education.⁹

In 1986, California Democratic Representative Sala Burton introduced House Concurrent Resolution 121, "A Concurrent Resolution to Express the Sense of the Congress that Public Schools should be Encouraged to Include a Study of the Holocaust in their History Curriculums," a piece of

legislation that, Matthewson explained, “carried no mandate, and provided no financial assistance, but merely called for public schools to be encouraged to teach the Holocaust as part of their history curriculum.”¹⁰ The bill found support in subcommittee but ultimately languished in the committee. It drew widespread support but ultimately failed because there was a strong lobby in opposition to it.¹¹

Soon, however, states like Illinois would take up the mantle of mandating Holocaust education in their schools. Matthewson relates how HB003, a bill proposed by Illinois State Representative Lee S. Preston, passed after a heated debate. In support of the bill, Rep. Preston argued that the lessons students could learn from Holocaust education were greater than merely the history itself and that students would learn moral truths vital to becoming a good democratic citizen. Moreover, passage of the bill would come at little cost to the state because individual districts would be responsible for enacting it and because the textbooks already in use were deemed satisfactory. The bill’s sponsors argued also that a need for a mandate existed after a study conducted by the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois found that, out of the schools in the 11% of Illinois school districts that responded to a survey, 84% “claimed to have no course on the Holocaust.”¹²

Some issues did arise during the proceedings. For one, the bill merely mandated that the Holocaust be taught, and, although the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois’s Dr. Leon Stein developed a five-day curriculum for instruction on the Holocaust in Illinois schools, Rep. Preston admitted that “ten minutes of instruction would be sufficient to satisfy the requirements of the mandate.”¹³ Also, in arguing in favor of the bill, Rep. Preston deviated from the Jewish-centric narrative espoused by the foundational organizations of the USHMM when he noted “that there were many other victims beyond those of Jewish descent within the Third Reich” by speaking about the “eleven million victims” of the event rather than separating the Jewish victims from the non-Jewish victims.¹⁴ Rep. Preston’s

rhetoric, though pragmatic in intent in that it hoped to appeal to a wider array of representatives, demonstrates the power states wield in defining what Holocaust education means.

The text of HB003 is available in Matthewson's dissertation. It does only mandate teaching of the Holocaust without stipulating a minimum of class time. Additionally, aligning with the USHMM's definition and not so much Rep. Preston's words in the legislative chamber, the bill defines the Holocaust as the "Nazi atrocities of 1933 to 1945," and the six million Jews are separate in the wording from the other victims of the Holocaust.¹⁵ HB312, the 2005 revision of Illinois's original Holocaust education mandate, includes the same definition of the Holocaust but adds text mandating "an additional unit of instruction studying other acts of genocide across the globe" that includes the Armenian Genocide, among others. The bill includes more text that declares one of the bill's goals to be recognizing the continuance of "crimes of genocide" worldwide and "[detering] indifference to crimes against humanity and human suffering wherever they occur."¹⁶

Holocaust education organizations were against Illinois's 2005 Holocaust education bill because they felt it diluted the historical significance and uniqueness of the Holocaust. Matthewson relates that the Executive Director of the Holocaust Memorial Foundation and a spokesman for the Anti-Defamation League both lamented the negative consequences of this new mandate. The local Jewish community voiced these misgivings on behalf of these groups. Though I seek in this paper to argue that Holocaust education organizations act parallel to states' legislation, in this case, both the Holocaust Memorial Foundation and the ADL worked to negatively influence Holocaust education legislation.¹⁷

The most recent legislative development in the history of Illinois's Holocaust education mandate is a bill providing for a Holocaust and Genocide Commission.¹⁸ The commission's mission statement describes it as an entity that seeks to provide "guidance," "information," and

“recommendations.”¹⁹ The committee appears to be a step toward bringing some kind of standardization to Holocaust education in the state of Illinois, something Holocaust education organizations have been trying to do at the national level for much longer. On the “Training & Programming” subheading of the “Support for Educators” section of the website are three hyperlinks, one linking professional development opportunities through Echoes and Reflections, the ADL-sponsored curriculum; one linking professional development opportunities through Facing History and Ourselves, a Holocaust education organization that offers an eponymous curriculum; and one linking the Illinois Holocaust Museum’s student field trip page.²⁰ Thus, though the commission does represent the state’s acting to enhance the efficacy of its Holocaust education, it relies on Holocaust education organizations to accomplish that mission. This, in turn, serves to increase these organizations’ roles in structuring Holocaust education in the state.

In 1994, Florida joined states like Illinois in passing the Holocaust Education Bill, amending the education code in statute 1003.42 with text mandating instruction of the Holocaust.²¹ This has been the only Florida Holocaust education bill to date. Florida’s Holocaust education legislation, unlike Illinois’s, has not been amended to mention or mandate the teaching of other genocides.

The Florida Commissioner of Education created the Commissioner’s Task Force on Holocaust Education soon after the state adopted the legislation. The Florida task force thus differs from Illinois’s commission in that no legislation created it. Also unlike the Illinois commission, Florida’s task force’s website’s “Professional Learning” section references educator institutes and conferences held mostly by the Holocaust Education Resource Council.²² The HERC is an organization whose website says it is “funded in part by grants through the State of Florida Department of Education, The Tallahassee Jewish Federation, Ruby Diamond Foundation, and a member of the Association of

Holocaust Organizations.”²³ The rest of the task force’s website has extensive guides and guidelines for what materials to use for lower, middle, and high school, as well as a self-contained high school curriculum. Though Florida has not mandated Holocaust education for as long as Illinois has, based on its extensive website, support for organizations that provide its teachers professional development, and own curriculum, it appears to be in more control of its Holocaust education than Illinois.

Pennsylvania is the most recent states to have passed legislation related to Holocaust education. The state passed its Holocaust education bill in 2014. Unlike Florida and Illinois, the Pennsylvania law did not directly mandate Holocaust education. Rather, the law recommended it with the stipulation that a study reporting the proportion of school entities in Pennsylvania teaching the Holocaust would be conducted by the end of 2017 and that if that study “demonstrates that less than ninety percent of the school entities are offering instruction in the Holocaust, genocide and human rights violations,” a mandate would be enforced instead. The Pennsylvania law effectively brings the state in line with post-2010 Illinois legislation in that it provides for the teaching not only of the Holocaust but also other cases of genocide and human rights violations. Like Florida, however, the Pennsylvania bill provides for curricular and professional development support to teachers. Unlike both states, Pennsylvania does not have a state Holocaust education commission or task force of any kind. Instead, the State Board of Education provides oversight of state Holocaust education. The letter of the law does not make mention of the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust, though it does stipulate the teaching of certain topics, such as “post-World War II trials” and the separation of the experience of the event by “Jews” and “non-Jews.”²⁴

In late 2017, Pennsylvania’s State Board of Education released its study and found that over 90% of schools were indeed teaching the Holocaust, genocide, and human rights violations. In fact, over 93% of schools, including

cyber schools and trade schools, taught the event. Kathleen J. Davis at WESA, Pittsburgh's NPR news radio station, reported based on comments made by an official at the State Board of Education that the majority of the remaining seven percent of schools were "trade schools and K-5 institutions."

The final state I choose to mention in this section of the paper is Alaska. As of this writing, Alaska has not passed any laws regarding the teaching of the Holocaust. However, as will be explained below, Holocaust education organizations facilitate Holocaust education in even the most remote parts of the state, filling in a need the state itself has not yet filled. As recently as February 28, 2018, Megan Cerullo of *The New York Daily News* reported that Alaska's sole congressperson, Representative Don Young, in voicing his opposition to gun control, asked, "How many Jews were put in ovens because they were unarmed?" implying that Jews would not have been put in concentration camps by the Germans had they been afforded Second Amendment rights, though his press secretary was quick to reframe his comments.²⁵ On a different note, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported on April 24, 2017 that "26 legislators representing 20 states committed to introduce legislation that would require public schools to teach about the Holocaust, the Armenian Genocide, and other genocides." Out of those twenty states, Alaska was one, demonstrating a desire among at least one member of Alaska's state legislature to mandate Holocaust education.²⁶

Holocaust education is a phenomenon not all states have chosen to influence and direct through the passage of legislation. Also, none of the states shown has attempted to enforce a universal kind of Holocaust teaching, though some have instead chosen to create a framework in which instruction is supposed to occur by defining the Holocaust and by making access to certain kinds of teaching materials and professional development more accessible. Because no state has mandated Holocaust education and then attempted to provide a rigid, fully formed package of Holocaust education materials for every teacher to utilize, there is room for the teaching materials

and other services that Holocaust education organizations provide.

Early History of Holocaust Curricula in the United States

A brief history of early Holocaust curricula in the U.S. is helpful for understanding the role played by both states and Holocaust education organizations because it illuminates not only the gaps that existed in Holocaust teaching prior to any state legislation but also the extent to which the Holocaust was already being taught. Another important takeaway from the early history of Holocaust curricula in the U.S. is the emergence of the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum that soon turned into a highly influential Holocaust education organization dedicated to teaching the Holocaust and other instances of genocide.

Thomas Fallace documents the history of American Holocaust education in his book *The Emergence of Holocaust Education in American Schools*. In it, he gives the history of the first Holocaust curricula to emerge in the U.S. Fallace writes that events like the trial of Adolf Eichmann and the Six-Day War captured the American imagination in the 50s and 60s but notes that it was Elie Wiesel's publishing an article in 1972 in the New York Times entitled "Telling the War" that spurred Albert Post to create the first curriculum focused on the Holocaust.²⁷

This first curriculum was flawed, Fallace writes, because Post "did not ground his lessons in the research and theories on moral reasoning or the recent work of social studies researchers on value-conflict." This meant his curriculum was not based on any of the contemporary research on best teaching practices and curricular structure, making it, by Fallace's and other critics' estimations, "weak." Even so, the New York City Board of Education began in 1977 to recommend teaching the Holocaust using Post's curriculum, the first governmental entity to do anything of the sort.²⁸

In 1973 in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Roselle Chartock wrote a Holocaust curriculum and went on to publish it. She developed what Fallace

calls an “alliance with the ADL” whereby the organization published her curriculum in 1978, resulting “in the inclusion of the unit in [a high school class called Social Education].”²⁹ Fallace writes that the ADL did not expend political capital to lobby for Holocaust education in public schools, though it did support efforts that arose. It appears from this case and the mention of following cases of ADL-sponsored and supported curricula that, even without an “active agenda,” the ADL served the purpose of facilitating the growth and propagation of Holocaust education and education materials. In New Jersey, for example, the ADL helped Richard Flaim and Edwin Reynolds develop and publish a curriculum in 1983 called “The Holocaust and Genocide: A Search for Conscience.” Fallace writes that the New Jersey State Board of Education provided funding for the project while the ADL “coordinated work on the curriculum and invited hundreds of organizational leaders to participate in the design process at six statewide meetings.” The state of New Jersey and the ADL also cooperated on this curricular project, with the ADL publishing the curriculum and “the teacher’s guide [beginning] with an introduction by Governor Thomas Kean,”³⁰ showing that the state government had over half a decade before another state passed the nation’s first Holocaust education-mandating legislation. Although I will posit that states and Holocaust education organizations work together in an often-indirect way, rarely do they cooperate as directly as the ADL and the state of New Jersey did in 1983.

Two teachers in Brookline, Massachusetts created the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum. The curriculum was successful, and the two teachers received a “federal Title IV-B... grant for schools with underprivileged children,” which they used to found the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation. The establishment of the foundation, which still exists as a Holocaust education organization today, was important in reframing perception of the Holocaust. The curriculum compared the Holocaust to other genocides, human rights abuses, and dangerous phenomena such as the threat of nuclear war.³¹

The development of early Holocaust curricula made an impact on the future of Holocaust education in the United States. The ADL took on a supportive role, and a new entity, the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, emerged. Moreover, in some cases, states and the Federal Government played larger roles in the development of curricula, sometimes even tailoring them to suit their needs. A prototype for the construction of Holocaust curricula was forming early on, one that will be further addressed in a later section. This mechanism has changed over time with the imminent passing of relevant state legislation and the growth of Holocaust education organizations.

The role of organizations such as the ADL, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation

As discussed above, states that pass Holocaust education legislation inevitably have a significant impact on the Holocaust instruction in their schools. However, no state can control every aspect of its schools' Holocaust instruction. In the last two decades, as more states have passed Holocaust legislation, Holocaust education organizations like the ADL, the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum have developed curricula and other teaching materials that reach teachers in thousands of schools, ultimately aiding in the instruction of millions of students. Fallace, for his part, calls the USHMM and the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation two of the most influential entities in Holocaust education.³² The cooperation between states and Holocaust education organizations began to form the mechanism of American Holocaust education.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum opened and published its "Guidelines for Teaching About the Holocaust" (now available online) in 1993.³³ Fallace writes that then-director of education William Parsons had wanted the museum to serve as an educational institution that would

not issue an official curriculum but instead “serve as a clearinghouse for the networking of Holocaust educators and dissemination of Holocaust materials.”³⁴ Perusing the “Resources for Educators” section of their website now, however, one may find not only the guidelines, but also a whole host of other teaching resources including lesson plans and answers to “common questions.” There is also a section entitled “Teacher Training Programs” that lists three different types of professional development programs designed specifically for teachers.³⁵ One of the programs the museum offers is the “Belfer National Conference for Educators,” a program for teachers with fewer than five years of experience teaching about the Holocaust. The USHMM also sponsors and trains about twenty educators each year to be “Museum Teacher Fellows,” who are “expected to create and implement an outreach project in their schools, communities, or professional organizations.”³⁶ By instituting these programs, the museum hopes to instill enthusiasm, good teaching practices, and knowledge regarding the Holocaust across the nation. Lastly, the USHMM cooperates with regional Holocaust education organizations to offer workshops and conferences toward the goal of aiding the professional development of teachers of the Holocaust. Unlike the other two organizations investigated in this section, the museum does not offer numbers detailing the impact of its educational programs, and research revealing part of the museum’s impact is discussed below.

The Facing History and Ourselves Foundation has been around since 1976, ever since the first iteration of the eponymous curriculum was published. Over the last four decades, the foundation expanded into a worldwide presence and has gradually altered its curriculum. Today, the foundation has offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Denver, London, Los Angeles, Memphis, New York, Toronto, and the San Francisco Bay Area.³⁷ It offers programs tailored to the type of school using its curricula, be it a Jewish day school, a public school, or an independent school. Although the studies described later in this paper detail primarily public and Jewish

day schools, the data is significant in terms of the foundation's impact on American Holocaust education, with "over 1,500 independent schools in its global network."³⁸ The Facing History and Ourselves Foundation reports in a professional development calendar that it provides many professional development opportunities, offering several workshops, webinars, and community events every month.³⁹ The foundation also reports that its curricula improve schools' students, teachers, and classrooms by providing evaluation studies and research.⁴⁰ "The most comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of [the Facing History and Ourselves] professional development approach" is the 2010 National Professional Development Evaluation Study, which includes findings toward the foundation's curricula's teacher and student "impact." Among other findings, the survey reports that students of Facing History materials were more likely to self-report feeling more "efficacious... in understanding and/or engaging in civic matters" via a survey that, for instance, asked them to rate their sense of their own impact through public actions in making a difference. Another finding regarding students was that, out of four measures of tolerance, Facing History students "demonstrated more tolerance on two of these measures," these being measures of tolerating people who disagree with oneself politically and "awareness of the experiences of prejudice and discrimination in the past or present of the particular ethnic, racial, or religious groups that they named.... [Facing History students were] more likely to be aware of anti-Semitism than control group students."⁴¹ Taking a closer look at the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, it becomes important to ask whether or not it can be counted as a Holocaust education organization. To be fair, as Fallace writes, at the foundation's outset, the seminal curriculum focused primarily on the Holocaust and its identity as a genocide.

The Anti-Defamation League is not an organization entirely dedicated to Holocaust education, however it played a role in American Holocaust education for decades, partnering with the USC Shoah Foundation and

Yad Vashem to establish the Echoes & Reflections Holocaust Education Organization. On its “About Us” page, Echoes & Reflections reports that it has “impacted 5.2 million students,” “reached over 12,000 schools,” and “empowered more than 50,000 educators.”⁴² The National Center for Education Statistics reports that there are about 98,200 public schools in the United States, meaning Echoes & Reflections has reached over ten percent of all American public schools.⁴³ Moreover, like the USHMM’s educational materials, all of Echoes and Reflections’ materials are available for free online. In addition to providing the curricular information necessary to teach about the Holocaust, the Echoes & Reflections website offers teacher training through webinars, in-person programs, and online classes.⁴⁴ Since it was first released in 2005, Echoes & Reflections has been a “multimedia curriculum,” making use of the USC Shoah Foundation’s visual archives of survivor testimony. They partnered with Yad Vashem, Israel’s foremost Holocaust memorial and museum, and as Avner Shalev, the museum’s chairman, said, “Yad Vashem... was able to provide material for [Echoes & Reflections] by drawing upon its own vast pedagogical resources, as well as on other Yad Vashem resources such as the archives, library, art collection, and on-site historians.”⁴⁵ Echoes & Reflections mixes discussion, historical documents, artwork, poetry, visual history testimony, and other forms of media in its curricular content.⁴⁶

In 2013, the ADL reported that the Echoes & Reflections staff traveled from their office in Maryland to the remote city of Kodiak, Alaska to provide professional development for twenty-five teachers. This trip demonstrates the commitment and effectiveness of the ADL’s efforts through Echoes & Reflections to give teachers the tools to provide Holocaust education for students in every part of America. In the ADL post, one teacher who attended the program said, “this particular training was so helpful. The resources that you were able to place in our hands are going to help me change the way I teach my students, and it will help me provide more perspectives

for my students to view the Holocaust.”⁴⁷ Unfortunately, information on the prevalence of these Holocaust education organizations’ curricula and educational materials in America primary and secondary schools is relatively scant. The following paragraph will discuss the relevant findings of studies conducted over the past two decades.

Jeremy A. Ellison’s 2002 case study of a random sample of Illinois secondary schools reported that Holocaust education organizations played a significant role in shaping classroom instruction of the Holocaust. In his section of findings on how the Holocaust is being taught, a table titled “Curricular Guides Used for Teaching About the Holocaust” shows that 21.0% of teachers reported using guides provided by the Survivors of the Shoah, a precursor organization for Echoes & Reflections, and 20.1% of teachers reported using guides provided by the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation. Compiled alongside with the curricular guides provided by a local Holocaust education organization, the Skokie Holocaust Memorial Museum, was used by 7.9% of teachers used.⁴⁸ A 2008 study conducted by Allison Dobrick on fifth grade teachers in the school district of a large southern Florida county had similar findings. Dobrick found that, though the USHMM’s “Teaching About the Holocaust” guide “was not provided to Florida’s teachers through either the state or the district, a substantial minority” of teachers reported using the guide. Moreover, the guide had already been used by state education officials to help craft the state’s own Holocaust education program. In fact, only 11% of respondents reported using the state’s educational guide. In contrast, 20.8% of respondents reported using the USHMM guide. Moreover, 16.8% of respondents reported using Daniel’s Story, a story about a young boy who survives the Holocaust “written as an accompaniment to a photographic exhibit at the” USHMM.⁴⁹ The study mentions Echoes & Reflections, reporting that the school district disseminated the “multimedia curriculum” to its high schools. In 2017, Jeffrey A. Ellison published another study with Hau Fai Edmond Law that focused

on Holocaust education in Jewish day schools. The Ellison and Law study found that 72% of respondents used the internet, and 72% used secondary texts/readings. Out of the websites used, the USHMM website was the most commonly mentioned, and the Facing History and Ourselves curriculum was the most widely reported “secondary text and curricular guide.” Though not bound to state teaching standards, the Jewish day schools in this study show a disinclination toward using state Holocaust education materials and an affinity for those produced by Holocaust education organizations.⁵⁰

Perceived Mechanism between States and Holocaust Education organizations in constructing American Holocaust Education

As exhibited through state legislation, Holocaust education organizations, and the previously presented studies, Holocaust education in America’s primary and secondary schools is seldom the product of a single educational entity’s efforts. In a broad sense, the mechanisms of Holocaust education in the United States have many moving pieces. It begins with states passing legislation that offers frameworks in which materials provided by Holocaust education organizations may serve to supply teachers with the means actually to teach their students. The statistics released by the Holocaust education organizations and summarized on their websites demonstrate that students and teachers are using their materials, while the surveys of teaching in Illinois and Florida, two states that have mandated Holocaust education in their public schools, show that teachers use the curricular materials of Holocaust education organizations more than they use those provided by states. States that lack Holocaust education mandates, like Alaska, depend solely on Holocaust education organizations to provide the necessary curricular materials and professional development. In such cases, the mechanism is different, and presumably less effective, as without mandated legislation there is no way for a state to guarantee Holocaust education.

Conclusion

Holocaust education in the United States has been a complicated affair ever since the first curriculum was published. There are a variety of different interests involved that produce a complex notion of partnership and competition. At the heart of the complexity are the prerogatives of individual teachers who try to use the materials they deem most effective in the absence of legislative mandates. Holocaust education organizations, such as the USHMM and the ADL through Echoes & Reflections, seek to help teachers provide the most accurate Holocaust education.

Holocaust education organizations and school teachers are a highly dynamic duo. Teachers can alter their curricula according to the latest materials, and Holocaust education organizations can change their materials with similar speed. State legislation, on the other hand, involves so many inherent checks and balances, and must answer to so many more constituent interests that it has thus far been unable to enact an effective Holocaust education program. For the last three decades, ever since Illinois passed the first mandatory Holocaust education bill, this has been the pattern of Holocaust education in America.

This mechanism holds the potential to have a greater impact on Americans' collective memory of the Holocaust. Because Holocaust education organizations like the USHMM and the ADL reach so many students, their desired message is broadcast. This result is somewhat ironic in that these non-state organizations follow and advocate for a definition of the Holocaust endorsed by the US Federal Government, as noted above. In that sense, though House Continuing Resolution 121 did not pass back in 1986, some semblance of federal construction exists in American Holocaust education. At the same time, the influence of the Facing History and Ourselves Foundation, which has an interest in providing moral education rather than the teaching of a unique historical event that primarily targeted Jews, likely weaves a different memory for the students whose teachers employ its curricular

materials, though its use by Jewish day schools may signal its palatability to Jewish instructors who likely have a similar interest in protecting the veracity of the event as the USHMM and the ADL.

In researching this topic, I had originally assumed that the mechanism would be much simpler, with states providing a legal framework and a select few Holocaust education organizations providing the educational materials. However, my main takeaway from this research is how much more complicated the process is. An avenue for further research would be to examine the efficacy of these organizations' efforts to lobby state governments toward passing or denying certain kinds of Holocaust or genocide education legislation. Ultimately, this research proposes a mechanism that explains the state of American Holocaust education.

Brent is a junior from Dallas, Texas. He is on a year abroad at the University of Cambridge studying history and economics. He thinks Penn is a great institution. So great, in fact, that he felt it necessary to view its greatness from afar. For a year.

Endnotes

1. Art Spiegelman, *The Complete Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (London: Penguin Books, 2003).
2. Peter Jamison, "Holocaust Museum Tour Ends Early for White," *The Washington Post*, April 20, 2018, accessed April 26, 2018, http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1P4-2027444135.html?refid=easy_hf.
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