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Remembering in Future Generations: American Holocaust Museums and Memorials

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**REMEMBERING IN FUTURE GENERATIONS:
AMERICAN HOLOCAUST MEMORIALS AND MUSEUMS**

by

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PROFESSOR GONZALES-DAY**

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I. Introduction

As I entered *Shalekhet—Fallen Leaves*, an installation at the Jewish Museum Berlin, I froze when I heard the loud clanking sounds of iron plates beneath my feet. I felt uncomfortable and stuck: there were 10 000 screaming iron faces surrounding me. Every move I made more screams erupted. The exhibition left me feeling shaken and involved; I had played a role in stepping on the individuals faces, even if they were just iron. This memorial not only made me think on a deeper level about my discomfort and pain, but it allowed me to reflect about my own role as a third-generation Holocaust survivor. How is a Holocaust museum or memorial supposed to make an individual feel? Is the artist or collective behind the work looking to elicit a certain response? These questions set the stage for this exploration on memorials and the large question of the memory of the Holocaust. In order to continue to keep the memories of my family's history alive, museums and memorials continue to be important sites within the communities I inhabit. Growing up around the historic sites of violence in Europe and then immigrating to the United States, I have witnessed how different memorials and museums are because of their location, which is an ocean away from the site of trauma. Throughout the past few years, a notable generational shift has begun, meaning that the number of first-generation survivors is shrinking. In current discussions on Holocaust memory, that generational shift is at

the center of the conversations as scholars wonder how this will impact the future of Holocaust memorialization.



Figure 1: Menasche Kadishman, Shalekhet - Fallen Leaves, July 7, 2016, Iron, Installation, Libeskind Building Jewish Museum Berlin, image by author

The Holocaust is seen from different lenses today: the political, the religious, the cultural, and the social. A huge part of memorializing the Holocaust has been done with the erection of museums, monuments, and memorials. As there is a generational shift because of Holocaust survivors dwindling, there's also an institutional shift in museums and memorials. Museums and memorials are being faced with the need for more community involvement and for the institutions to extend beyond their physical spaces. Furthermore, new technologies such as cell phone applications and holograms are being implemented in museum and memorial spaces. These two shifts are colliding because as one generation fades, the needs of the younger generation are becoming prevalent. The fading of firsthand narratives in combination with the rise of technology and its popularity within museum and memorial institutions has produced questions as well as worries about the future of Holocaust memory. The Holocaust has been considered as a unique part of human history because of its many complexities. Many individuals are concerned these shifts mean that the uniqueness of the Holocaust will fade along with its important narratives. However, it is precisely this shift that opens new possibilities to

engage remembrance among younger generations. A new framework would allow younger generations to better understand and have a stake in the Holocaust using connections to contemporary events. Through technology and new community initiatives, memory will shift, but it is that shift which will allow new narratives and conversations to flourish, keeping the memories alive. My paper will begin by describing current shifts in Holocaust memorialization, as well as in museums and memorials. Then, it will lay out some concerns for future memorialization. Subsequently, using the case studies of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial, this paper will demonstrate that the shifts actually lay out new possibilities for remembrance.

II. Current Shifts and Concerns

Holocaust memory has been a widely discussed theme in American society and is taught in many schools in addition to being required in certain states. According to a study conducted by Schoen Consulting in 2018, “Thirty-one percent of Americans, and 41 percent of millennials, believe that two million or fewer Jews were killed in the Holocaust; the actual number is around six million.”¹ Moreover, “Forty-one percent of Americans, and 66 percent of millennials, cannot say what Auschwitz was. And 52 percent of Americans wrongly think Hitler came to power through force.”² These numbers undoubtedly relate to the fact that teaching and remembrance of the Holocaust heavily relies on the narratives of survivors who, until now, could share their stories. Furthermore, the way that Holocaust memory is shaped is distinctly different in the

1. Maggie Astor, “Holocaust Is Fading from Memory, Survey Finds,” *The New York Times*, last modified April 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/04/12/us/holocaust-education.html>.

2. Ibid.

United States than in Europe since it did not occur on America's land. According to Sybil

Milton, a Holocaust scholar:

the United States as a country was offering potential asylum for refugees from Nazi Germany and Europe; The Americans were liberators, however accidental, of the concentration camps; The United States served as the new home of many survivors and their children and also provided haven for some of the perpetrators; The United States played a role in developing the Nuremberg and subsequent postwar trials.³

Thus, the way that memorials are made and the role they play are different than in Europe. The United States has taken on a more refugee-like role with the Holocaust, highlighting the fact that they came in to liberate the oppressed. This perspective is one that has been taken up by the United States in other wars and by intervening in situations across the globe, from Haiti to Iraq.

Memory can be defined as the process of storing information and then remembering that information. Aleida Assmann, whose work focuses on cultural and communicative memory, proposes four subfields: individual, social, political, and cultural. According to her definition, individual memories belong to a singular person, who remembers through their own perspective; these memories disappear with death. Social memories, which are usually embodied in monuments and memorials reflect memories created with others, whether through generational similarities, family, or friends. Political memory relies on external symbols and material representations, while cultural memory combines remembering and forgetting. Cultural and political memory is constantly changing and usually contested.⁴ The firsthand lived memories of

3. Milton, *In Fitting Memory*, 14.

4. Aleida Assmann, "Memory, Individual and Collective," in *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Charles Tilly (Oxford University press, 2006), <https://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270439.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199270439-e-011>.

Holocaust survivors have been essential in constructing memorials and museums. Assmann writes, “for a memory to become symbolically extended, it must be separated from the person who originally possessed the memory.”⁵ By that she references the fact that the individual recollection leaves the individual sphere to become a collective or cultural memory. Thus, the memory becomes part of something greater than the individual, changing the recollection. According to Halbwachs, a French philosopher, memory is acquired, remembered and localized in society.⁶ Looking at Halbwachs’ statement while thinking about how Holocaust memory is shaped begs the question of how memory will continue to be shaped when lived reminiscence vanishes. The threat of disappearance creates an internal pressure for survivors to remember the Holocaust, bringing individuals back to traumatic memories. These memories are used to shape and change the sites of trauma and to allow others to understand, remember, and learn. As Assmann writes, the “whole truth” of history is and always will remain inaccessible, and this is precisely why we are constantly being forced to find new ways of approaching it. She states, “the future of memory essentially depends on whether the impulse to do this remains alive.”⁷ As scholars try to tackle the future of Holocaust memory, they look at events such as Chernobyl and September 11, where the trauma is so recent that the way to remember is still done by looking at yearly dates and dealing with the inner shock that is still so present. Through these yearly dates, memory-making transforms from individual remembrance to collective commemoration,

5. Aleida Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma: Memory and the Politics of Postwar Identity*, trans. Sarah Clift (New York: Fordham University Press, 2016), 179.

6. Carla Everstijn, “The Digital Presence of Museums and the Implications for Collective Memory,” *MW2019: MuseWeb 2019*, 2019, <https://mw19.mwconf.org/paper/the-digital-presence-of-museums-and-the-implications-for-collective-memory/>.

7. Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 205.

allowing an extension to a larger field. In 2020 the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz will take place, but the memorial events will be different than a few decades ago. There will not be thousands of survivors, and the conversations will be linked to more contemporary themes, especially to current happenings in the United States which include anti-Semitic attacks as well as the rise of the alt right.

In examining how memory shifts change in what way the Holocaust is seen, it is important to look at different ways future generations may define memorials, museums, and monuments, as well as how these terms differ from each other. Memorials for the Holocaust have been seen as sites of commemoration, whether it be in a heroic light or as sites of mourning. The memorials are additionally a reflection of the national ideological framework since every country has played a different role in history. For example, in Israel the Holocaust is seen as a continuation of centuries of persecution against the Jewish people and a moral justification for the state of Israel, while in the United States, it is seen within the larger context of racism and extends beyond the Jews murdered.⁸ While museums often house memorials, according to Kevin Hetherington, a museum studies theorist, their aim is to “entertain but [to] do that through an engagement with a series of other equally important functions including collecting artefacts, ordering and classifying them, conserving them, interpreting them and constructing knowledge and making them not only entertaining for their visitors but also educational and recognizable as indexes of a particular stories of identity as well.”⁹ The museum is traditionally a space created to show artifacts of society, history, and as a source of knowledge making for those who visit.

8. Sybil Milton, *In Fitting Memory: The Art and Politics of Holocaust Memorials* (Wayne State University Press, 1991), 8.

9. Kevin Hetherington, “Foucault, the museum and the diagram,” *The Sociological Review* 53, no. 3 (2011): 457-475. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-954X.2011.02016. x.

However, it has evolved into a space that can forge social connection and possibly facilitate conversations which are otherwise difficult to have. The word monument derives from the Latin verb, *monere*, which simultaneously means to remind and to warn.¹⁰ Arthur Danto states, “we erect monuments so that we shall always remember and build memorials so that we shall never forget.”¹¹ Furthermore, Edward Young, a Holocaust scholar, states that “monuments commemorate the memorable and embody the myths of beginnings. Memorials ritualize remembrance and mark the reality of ends.”¹² Monuments usually portray the heroic or an important event explicitly, whereas memorials focus on memory. While monuments and memorials seem like closely linked terms, memorials aid communities to think about events in relationship to the future while re-examining the past, which monuments usually do not. Memorials look at the trauma while imagining ways to aid individuals in remembering.

The design of museums and memorials depends on the role the institution has been chosen to have within a community and founding structure. Differently than in most European countries, most museums in the United States heavily rely on individual donors. There are community-based memorials and museums, which insert narratives from members of the community, such as memorials created by members of the community to commemorate something that happened in that space. There are also spontaneous memorials and museums, or memorials created to commemorate the heroes of the event or those who have passed. Those memorials, such as the New England Holocaust Memorial in Boston, Massachusetts or the

10. Milton, *In Fitting Memory*, 7.

11. James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust memorials and meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 3.

12. Young, *The Texture of Memory*, 3.

Judenplatz in Vienna, Austria, offer a sort of confrontation with death, which prevents the viewer from going on with their usual day. They are meant to make the individual feel deeply and to bring them into a state of mind different from one they are used to being in every day. The last role of the memorial and museum is to have visitors think about the Holocaust as a whole and as a lesson for humanity. Memorials have different roles for different individuals—for some it is a site of mourning, and for others a site of learning.

The ethical function essential for creating a “successful” memorial, however, comes from its ability to elicit the viewers to ask questions and establish dialogues about the past, the present, and more importantly, the future. The artist Krzysztof Wodiczko states that “monuments and memorials, in their speechlessness and stillness, look strangely human, while traumatized humans, in their motionlessness and silence, may appear strangely monumental. Speechless survivors living in their shadows face the blank facades and blind eyes of our public buildings and memorials, those speechless witnesses to present-day injustices.”¹³ Some of Krzysztof Wodiczko’s art practice confronts memory and the role of art in the political sphere, specifically war. In many of his art installations, which have been projected across the globe, he contrasts old historic buildings with critical projections. The way in which he combines different scenes, often classic historical ones, with contemporary and critical video projections allows the viewer to interact with the scene differently. The viewer is forced to confront an everyday building in a different way. Although his art works are often temporary, his art plays a role in memory-making and serves as a model for using public space in an engaging way. Krzysztof Wodiczko utilizes public space by looking at its architectural assets, which serve as a model of ways those creating

13. Julian Bonder, “On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials,” *Places* 21(1) (2009): 69, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/4g8812kv>.

museums and memorials should be looking at the space. While there are many ways in which we can think about the designs and spaces of museums and memorials, Kirk Savage writes, “design cannot claim to engineer memory.”¹⁴ Savage is echoing the idea that no matter how individuals attempt to create memorials and museums, visitors will always see the space in the way they want. While the future of Holocaust memorialization is debated, it is essential to remember that it is always subject to political and cultural changes in society. Indeed, it is the conversations resulting from this intersection of traditional remembering and current events that allow memory to grow.

The difficult point in making a memorial or institution comes when you have to stop looking for different models and agree that one is the best solution. When I worked at the largest and most historic museum institution in the United States during the summer of 2019, my boss told me to look at every museum I entered thinking about this question: “What would the museum look like if you built it today? What would you change, take out, or keep?” These questions require a deep look at the structures of the institutions, and a re-examination of the values. On one hand, there’s a desire for the original framework to remain in place, on the other, changing it may bring new stories to light, as well as drive in new audiences. Institutions and memorials have taken a role of impacting the formation of national and regional identity, public discourse, social change and collective memory. Nevertheless, their role is shifting into a space pushing for social change. Historically, museums in the United States have been dominated by the white upper class and colonial roots. These roots were founded with objectives to collect, export, and appropriate. Today, through internal and external changes, the museum is becoming

14. Kirk Savage, “The Past in the Present,” *Harvard Design Magazine* 9 (1999), <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/9/the-past-in-the-present>.

a site of social action. This is due to technological changes such as digitizing catalogues and collections, incorporating digital applications, and creating digital experiences for visitors as well as deeper internal changes. These internal changes often bring structural change, awareness building, and listening. They look back at the historic legacies of the museum which often include colonialism, racism, and white privilege. In today's society, it is also essential to examine the actual impact over the intent in museums and memorials. MASS Action, a group dedicated to creating a platform for public dialogues about inclusion and equity in museums writes, "museums can be sites for social inclusion when they collectively work to address social issues with community partners. Becoming rooted in community work not only increases the perceived value of the museum, but it helps museums meet their mission as service organizations in ways that museums have neglected in the past."¹⁵ This exemplifies the notion that the Holocaust needs to rethink in what ways they can remain relevant, meaning they have to change the ways in which they draw in their audience.

Relevance is especially difficult when the social and political sphere of institutions has begun to move away from using physical spaces to online spaces. This means the younger generations are less likely to show up to physical events when they can access these experiences online or from anywhere. Nietzsche asks about the advantages of being concerned with monumental views of the past, which in a contemporary view can be compared to the need for physical spaces of remembrance. He writes

Whenever the monumental vision of the past rules over the other ways of looking at the past, I mean the antiquarian and the critical, the past itself suffers damage: very great portions of the past are forgotten and despised, and flow away like a grey uninterrupted flood, and only single embellished facts stand out as islands: there seem to be something unnatural and wondrous about the rare persons who become visible at all, like the golden

15. *MASS Action Toolkit* (Minneapolis Museum of Art, 2017), 66, <https://www.museumaction.org/resources>.

hip which the pupils of Pythagoras thought they discerned in their master. Monumental history deceives with analogies: with tempting similarities the courageous are enticed to rashness, the enthusiastic to fanaticism; and if one thinks of this history as being in the hands and heads of talented egoists and enraptured rascals then empires are destroyed, princes murdered, wars and revolutions instigated and the number of historical “effects in themselves,” that is, of effects without sufficient causes, is further increased.¹⁶

Nietzsche’s claims align with a lot of the classically erected memorials and monuments, such as Nathan Rapoport’s *Liberation* memorial in Liberty State Park New Jersey. The memorial represents an American soldier carrying the body of a Holocaust survivor, presumably away from a concentration camp. It shows the United States through the lens of saviors, which Nietzsche is indirectly critiquing and believes is deceiving the past and letting other visions of the history disappear. Even though the *Liberation* memorial might have been useful at the time of the erection, today it confronts a side of history younger generations may be less inclined to relate to. Nietzsche affirms the fact that history is often written by the “superior man,” who is often a white wealthy man. Nevertheless, museums and memorials such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum or the National Museum of African American History and Culture, are clearly making efforts to move away from being shaped by an idealized notion of “the superior man”, making them models for future imaginings of museums and memorials.

III. Case Study: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was inaugurated in 1993, standing in Washington D.C., adjacent to the Washington monument. The museum came a few decades later than memorials on the site of trauma. Before examining the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, it is crucial to look at a memorial site built on such a site. The Mauthausen

16. Friedrich W. Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and the Disadvantage of History for Life* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980), 17.

Concentration Camp in Austria is a poignant example showing a transformation from a site of pain to a site of memorializing and learning. A lot of Holocaust memorials focus on trying to make visitors fathom the scope of the injury, however, they fail to tie in the political and social frameworks in place that allowed that injury to happen. The Mauthausen Concentration Camp does a strong job at doing both. The former concentration camp is situated on a hill, looking over a village. Those in the village could look up and see what was happening. This has become a complexity that can be incorporated into current discussions, because the landscape can still be seen today. It brings about interesting conversations about bystanders and co-conspirators. One part of the site was the so-called “stairs of death”, which were located above a granite quarry where prisoners were forced to carry heavy stones up the steps. The concentration camp also had multiple subcamps and gas chambers. After the war ended, the memorial site opened in 1949, a visitor center in 2003, and the permanent exhibitions in 2013.¹⁷ Today, the memorial is a site of learning and remembering for diverse visitors, whether they explore exhibitions, wander through the former camp, or explore the memorials. A remarkable part of the memorial site is that there are memorial structures from all over the world that visitors can walk through. Countries, cities, and organizations have filled the rural landscape that nowadays looks serene with memorials honoring children, the French, Dutch, Polish, Jewish and many more. The memorial states

The Mauthausen Memorial is a former crime scene, a place of memory, a cemetery for the mortal remains of thousands of those murdered here and, increasingly, a site of political and historical education. Its task is to ensure public awareness of the history of the Mauthausen concentration camp and its subcamps, the memory of its victims, and the responsibility borne by the perpetrators and

17. “History of the Mauthausen Memorial,” *Mauthausen Memorial*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/en/History/History-of-the-Memorial/History-of-the-Mauthausen-Memorial>.

onlookers. At the same time, it seeks to promote public critical engagement with this history in the context of its significance for the present and future.¹⁸

Looking at this mission statement, the memorial alludes to the idea that the site is a political and historical site of education. The way the statement is framed also shows in what ways it is distinctly different from American memorials, because it is trying to keep in mind the perpetrators and onlookers, who also inhabit that landscape. It seeks to heal communities. The last line seeks to engage the visitors to converse with each other, and to bring their visit beyond the gates of the site.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is composed of the museum and memorial site, an educational foundation, and the committee on conscience.¹⁹ Its mission statement reads: “the museum’s primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy; to preserve the memory of those who suffered; and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.”²⁰ This hints towards a broader context and attempts to add a more global lens that every visitor can relate to; for example, their responsibilities as citizens. This is why the museum also appeals to a large range of visitors, and that less than 10% of visitors are Jewish.²¹ The architecture of the museum, done by James Ingo

18. “The Mauthausen Memorial,” *Mauthausen Memorial*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.mauthausen-memorial.org/en/Visit/The-Mauthausen-Memorial>.

19. “Mission and History,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/mission-and-history>.

20. Ibid.

21. “Frequently Asked Questions,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/collections/ask-a-research-question/frequently-asked-questions#9>.

Freed recalls the textures and tectonics of the camp. The materials he uses, such as steel, bricks, and glass evoke forms from the Holocaust. When the visitors enter the Hall of Witness, they feel the dense and closed space, recalling a railroad station. As the visitors move throughout the museum, they move along with an identification card of someone who was a part of the Holocaust that the visitors were given when they entered the museum. The space and the way individuals feel inside it also varies depending on the light. Shapes from the trauma can be noticed throughout the museum; the curved entranceways leading off of the Hall of Witness are reminiscent of the shape of crematoria doors, while the massive brick on the north side represents chimneys.²² Using this architectural style, the museum acknowledges the ways in which it cannot create the same effect as on-site memorials do, but it attempts to echo the feelings produced as one wanders through. By doing so, it ingrains a new feeling in the visitor's mind and keeps the architectural memories alive. Using these same tactics in new memorials or in technological additions to memorials is essential in reproducing a uniqueness.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was created in anticipation of the generational shift, as well as the slow disintegration of the Holocaust sites. This shift necessitates the creation of videos and audio footage and highlights the need to engage younger generations. The museum has also dedicated additional space to invite other narratives of trauma; for example, having an exhibition about the conflict in Syria. This is a way to engage new crowds, because it reconsiders current genocides and allows visitors to connect the two and leave the museum with a broader scope of awareness. Nevertheless, as time passes, the museum will need to further use technology and find new ways to engage younger generations to have a stake in the

22. Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 91.

museum. For example, its “First Person” program, which is a guided testimony shared by a Holocaust survivor in dialogue with a journalist twice a week from March to August, will fade. What will it be turned into? What will replace it? The National Museum of African American History and Culture, which opened in 2016, devotes itself to the “documentation of African American life, history, and culture.”²³ The museum addresses the history of slavery, and although there are no more living survivors, the institution has been able to keep individuals engaged and present in the museum space by deeply involving visitors using tools such as reflection booths, public events, and keeping the exhibition spaces contemporary. These reflection booths allow visitors to reflect on their visit and to discuss their memories. By talking about them and allowing them to be recorded, they are memorialized and kept alive. The generational shift of Holocaust survivors culminates with the generational shift of museum visitors, creating a move towards technology and community involvement. Personally, I have noticed this change by seeing more signs for downloadable apps at museum entrances or even seeing interactive museum robots, such as “Pepper”, who walks around the Smithsonian Institutions.²⁴ Although at first they seem impersonal and taking away the attention from the original narratives, these technological additions allow for younger generations to better interact with the works, as they are usually more accessible.

The Holocaust has always been described as a unique event, unlike any other in history, and many would like it to remain that way. The President’s Commission on the Holocaust, submitted in 1979, writes “the concept of the annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished

23. “About the Museum,” *National Museum of African American History and Culture*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://nmaahc.si.edu/about/museum>.

24. Pepper, the humanoid robot who is mainly housed in the Hirshhorn.

from their subjugation, was unprecedented; never before in human history had genocide been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral or religious constraints.”²⁵ However, as unique as the Holocaust is, that uniqueness needs to be shown in ways that are more appealing to younger generations, such as by utilizing technology and relating emotions felt today as well as at the time of the Holocaust. Many don’t realize its uniqueness and thus fail to realize its relevance. Edna Friedberg, a historian working at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, writes that “the Holocaust has become shorthand for good vs. evil; it is the epithet to end all epithets. And the current environment of rapid-fire online communication and viral memes lends itself particularly well to this sort of sloppy analogizing.”²⁶ Friedberg continues to argue that individuals have become more casual about the Holocaust, using it as an analogy for current issues such as animal rights and federal policies for undocumented immigrants. Friedberg, along with many other scholars of the Holocaust, believes that this is dangerous because it reduces the Holocaust to a morality tale instead of looking at the specific details that could be important to think and reflect on for the future.²⁷ Statistically speaking, most Americans know about the Holocaust, but fail to remember or were never taught details about it, which creates larger social and political implications. The lack of remembrance of details is what is changing the politics surrounding the Holocaust. Individuals hearing these

²⁵ “The President’s Commission on the Holocaust,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/presidents-commission>.

²⁶ Edna Friedberg, “Why Holocaust Analogies Are Dangerous,” *The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, last modified December 12, 2018, <https://www.ushmm.org/information/press/press-releases/why-holocaust-analogies-are-dangerous>.

²⁷ Ibid.

broad statements create their own references to the Holocaust, losing touch of the reality behind it. That is where technology and community-based events have the ability to bridge that divide, by bringing back new details that may be more relevant to younger generations.

IV. Case study: The Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial

Differently to the United States Holocaust Museum, the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial has stood outside without a museum structure since 1964 until 2018. The Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial was the first public monument in North America to memorialize the victims of the Holocaust when it was finished in 1964. It was titled *Monument to Six Million Jewish Martyrs* by Nathan Rapoport, a Polish Jew. As the generational shift occurs, it coincides with the need for public memorials and museums to be renovated and remodeled for conservation purposes. The Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial recently underwent a new “reactivation” process, and the San Francisco Holocaust Memorial is currently being conserved and cleaned. This is the perfect time to be able to think about ways to shift memorial spaces and regenerate public and community interest for future generations. In 2018, the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial had its opening ceremony for the “Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza.” Then, in 2019, the IWalk app was launched, which guides visitors thorough the memorial plaza using personal testimonials from Holocaust survivors and witnesses. There are multiple tour options, in English and Spanish, for different age groups, ranging from middle school to the general public. The options include “History of the Holocaust”, “Propaganda and Anti-Semitism”, and “Contemporary Anti-Semitism.”²⁸ The space contains Rapoport’s monument, but

28. “IWalk,” *Horwitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza*, accessed November 24, 2019, <https://www.philaholocaustmemorial.org/visit/iwalk/>.

now also includes train tracks from Treblinka concentration camp, and eternal flame, and six pillars. Rapoport's memorial shows flames of a burning bush, where multiple figures can be spotted such as a suffering mother, a wailing child, someone praying, and a Torah being held. At the top, flames become candles of a menorah. This memorial provides an example to how spaces are re-examined, and new complexities are being drawn out. By centering their objectives on engaging young people, increasing accessibility through technology, and adding contemporary aspects to the space, they are allowing it to grow and morph.

Museums are also trying to use technology to keep up with the disappearance of narratives, such as the Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center, which uses interactive 3D holograms of Holocaust survivors to facilitate conversations about the Holocaust as well as social justice.²⁹ The Philadelphia Holocaust memorial plaza app is a stellar example on how a guided tour has made its way onto a cell phone. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum's website provides a wide array of resources, making a visit to the museum less essential for gaining information. These technologies, on one hand, could be considered a loss of the uniqueness of visiting a memorial space and seeing it bare, without holding a cell phone or being distracted by the technology. However, the technologies allow a new sense of uniqueness, maybe not the one imagined by the last generation, but it is that mindset that remains essential.

By observing various tactics that museums and memorials are using to remain relevant and to tell visitors specificities of the Holocaust, such as exhibitions about other issues,³⁰

29. "Take a Stand Center," *Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center*, accessed December 7, 2019, <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/tas/>.

30. The US Holocaust Memorial Museum currently is exhibiting "Syria: Please Don't Forget Us," which tells the story of the conflict in Syria through the lens of one individual.

technological additions, and community events, it is clear institutions are trying to keep up. However, are they successful in this? In a time where technology is changing the way people remember, as well as the necessity for physical presence, museums need to think critically about political and social stakes for the younger generations. Bonder writes, “a memorial that truly speaks to traumatic memories—not only of the past, but of today—should come to exist through a process of engagement with the communities who share a vital interest in it.”³¹ In addition, there are often voices that are left behind or not included, when they should be. As the MASS Action Toolkit has outlined, there has begun to be a wave towards inclusion of more voices in creating spaces that welcome those that have felt excluded by them. This is seen with NMAAHC, where every time I have gone, the crowds have been more diverse than I have seen in any other museum in the United States. It is a space where families are not hesitant to bring their young children or teenagers. Nowadays, visitors expect to have information digitally and for spaces to be more accessible to them. This means pushing for new languages, more flexible opening times, and greater accessibility. These changes, in the long run, should draw in more people to the Holocaust and the stakes in it.

The problem is not that the Holocaust no longer relates to current issues in society, it is that the way it is being framed is not drawing enough parallels for many individuals. In order to avoid that loss of knowledge and remembrance, the Holocaust needs to be referenced back to contemporary issues. This can be done in various ways: from looking at the brutality of mass murder, which has recently happened in countries like South Sudan and Rwanda,³² to looking at

31. Bonder, “On Memory, Trauma, Public Space, Monuments, and Memorials,” 67.

32. “Country Case Studies,” *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*, accessed December 7, 2019, <https://www.ushmm.org/genocide-prevention/countries>.

the individuals persecuted in the Holocaust such as those thought to be a part of the LGBTQ community. This change begins in slow incorporations into traditional spaces, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has done with the Syrian conflict, to completely revamping memorial spaces, such as has been done with the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial.

V. Conclusion

Throughout this paper, by looking at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial, as well as other institutions, we have examined the consequences of current trends on Holocaust memorialization. Horst Hoheisel a leading figure in anti-memorials, offers a related perspective, beginning with his proposal to blow up the Brandenburg Gate as his entry in the competition for the Berlin Memorial for the Murdered Jews of Europe. In January 1997, Hoheisel installed a public installation projecting the “Arbeit Macht Frei” gate leading into Auschwitz onto the Brandenburg Gate for the duration of one night.³³ The Brandenburg Gate has been seen as a national symbol, but at the same time, Hitler marched and spoke around it. Similar to Krzysztof Wodiczko’s work, the artwork draws a link between an important site of memory and the Holocaust by merging two gates into one. Hoheisel is emphasizing that you cannot look at one gate while simply forgetting the other. Often, memorials inhabit historic spaces, like the Boston Holocaust Memorial, located on the freedom trail across from city hall or the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum adjacent to the national mall. The locations naturally become intersected. It is difficult to wander through one without thinking of the other. Throughout this paper, I have argued that Holocaust memory is evolving due to the

33. Assmann, *Shadows of Trauma*, 1-3.

generational shift along with the technological shift which is linked to the generational shift. These are occurring in order to continue to be engaging for younger generations and to keep up with their desires. Although this shift is changing remembrance, it should be looked at in a positive light. Hoheisel's work exemplifies this because it shows that no matter if history evolve, landscapes will always superpose each other and converse to build new memories. As Young states, counter-monuments are conceived to challenge the premises of the monument: "the monument has increasingly become the site of contested and competing meanings, more likely the site of cultural conflict than of shared national values and ideals."³⁴ This statement to many may seem like a threat to Holocaust memorialization, but in my eyes, it is these contested and competing meanings that create relevance in today's society. Although the specificity of the Holocaust may be fading, its importance relies in its relevance, which through Young's quote, is present. The Holocaust may be moving away from the uniqueness imagined and hoped for decades ago, but it is merely shifting towards new modes of remembering.

As I look back on my feet touching the *Shalekhet—Fallen Leaves*, I think that the uncomfortable and painful feelings around the memorial are what make it successful. Nevertheless, those feelings are no longer enough for the younger generation because they no longer directly relate them to the Holocaust. But are they even meant to? This is where technology and thinking about how current events relate to the Holocaust become useful links to continuing to keep memory alive. A scream of agony and pain is something relatable to any individual, no matter the generation. When I envision the evolution of Holocaust memory, I feel a pit in my stomach thinking about young individuals only looking at Holocaust holograms on

34. Edward Young, "Memory and Counter-Memory," *Harvard Design Magazine* 9 (1999), <http://www.harvarddesignmagazine.org/issues/9/memory-and-counter-memory>.

their phones. However, that pit in my stomach comes from the fact that I've had the privilege to talk to Holocaust survivors, so I know that uniqueness, whereas the younger generation along with individuals who lack access to sites of memory have not. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Philadelphia Holocaust Memorial, along with the other sites outlined in this paper are evolving the spaces they inhabit by incorporating new tools and mediums for conversation, showing that remembrance is not at a stillstand, but has the possibility to continue to evolve. Technology and broadening community engagement beyond the walls of institutions will expand access, and thus engage new conversations. Maybe the Holocaust won't be remembered in the same way than it was by older generations, but that allows for individuals to look at the Holocaust in a new contemporary lens which brings new political and social growth. We are not closing the book of Holocaust memory; we are simply turning the page.

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