

33RD SYMPOSIUM ON THE HOLOCAUST AND GENOCIDE



Connected

March 31 - April 4, 2025

VANIER
CÉGEP/COLLEGE



Vanier College Amphitheatre (B223)

This year's symposium explores connections across time, peoples, and places—both in the patterns of genocidal actions of those who have sought to erase them from history but also in the resilience of those who have endured these attempts. Montreal and Canada are home to many groups that have survived genocide including Jewish, Armenian and Ukrainian communities. The Symposium considers their stories while focusing particular attention on the Holocaust and its reverberations over time and across continents. In light of exponentially rising antisemitism across the world, education about the Holocaust and the various intersecting forms of Jew hatred is more critical than ever.

Monday, March 31

10:00-11:30 (B223)

SOVIET JEWRY DURING AND AFTER THE HOLOCAUST

Mark Groysberg

This talk reviews the Nazi invasion of Soviet lands and the fate of Jewish people living there including the “Holocaust by Bullets” at Babi Yar. It also dispels the myth of safe haven for Jewish people in the Soviet Union following WWII by considering the Doctors Plot and the political assassination of Yiddish theatre leader Mikhoels.

Born in Soviet Ukraine to two Holocaust survivors, Mark worked as a journalist in Ukraine and Chechnya for 20 years before immigrating to Canada in 1990. In 1994, he published the first Russian-language newspaper in Montreal, *The Voice of the Community*, of which he is still editor and publisher. He has also participated in numerous Russian, Ukrainian and Jewish community organizations and projects including related to WWII memory.

12:00-1:30 (B223)

STALIN'S GENOCIDE AND PUTIN'S GENOCIDAL INVASION

Roman Serbyn

This talk will compare Stalin's 1930s genocide against the Ukrainians to Putin's genocidal war against Ukraine started in 2014 (Crimea) in light of the 1948 UN Convention on Genocide. Dr. Serbyn considers the most relevant points of the convention, specifically the “intent to destroy”. The Holodomor was the genocide of millions by the Soviet regime to quell Ukrainian national revival. Professor Serbyn argues that “genocide against Ukrainians” refers to all the criminal acts of Stalin's regime and cannot be limited to “starvation by famine.

He then considers the genocidal invasion of Ukraine by Putin's Russia its systematic Russification of Ukrainian citizens. He asserts that both these events are attempts to wipe out unique Ukrainian sovereignty, identity and peoplehood and to assimilate Ukrainians into Russian identity, thus the “intent to destroy” envisioned under the Genocide Convention.

Born in Ukraine, Professor Serbyn studied at McGill, Université de Montréal and the Sorbonne after having emigrated

to Canada with his parents. Spanning multiple levels of education, he spent over 30 years of his teaching career at UQAM. He is an author and editor of books and articles on historical and political topics and cofounder and editor of the academic journal *Holodomor Studies* (2005-2008).

2:30-4:00 (B223)

EXILE FROM BABYLONIA

Gladys Daoud

In the 1950s, and despite having been established over 2,000 years earlier, the Jewish community of Babylonia (modern-day Iraq), was uprooted, its members kicked out, its property confiscated.

Gladys Daoud and her family were among those exiles. Her talk will explore her family and community's history in Iraq and its connections in other parts of the world, including in Europe during WWII.

Gladys is the co-founder of Seize Your Future, a non-profit leadership program for women. She founded STRTAC, a management firm and was the leader of the internship program at the Aerospace Engineering at Ecole Polytechnique. More recently, she coordinated events for Sephardi Voices Canada, an organization whose mission is to highlight the life and exile of Jews from the Middle East and North Africa.

Tuesday, April 1

10:00-11:30 (B223)

THE CONDITIONS OF JEWS IN MOROCCO DURING WWII

David Bensoussan

While Morocco was under a Protectorate, its sovereign had to contend with the French Vichy government that zealously enforced Nazi racist laws. This turbulent period in history will be examined in depth. How were the racist laws implemented? What were the attitudes of the French and Moroccan authorities, as well as the representatives of the Jewish community? How did the Morocco's Jewish population experience this era Finally, how has history interpreted these events?

Dr. David Bensoussan is a professor in the Department of Electrical Engineering at the École de technologie supérieure de l'Université du Québec. He is a member of the Academic Council of the Canadian

Institute for Jewish Research and member of the Commission on University Research and Education of the Conseil supérieur de l'éducation of the Quebec Government.

Dr. Bensoussan has served as President of the Communauté Sépharade Unifiée du Québec and has been involved in philanthropic and community organizations for many years. He has also written numerous literary works.

11:30-1:00 (B223)

THE SHOAH OUTSIDE OF EUROPE: THE IMPACT OF NAZISM ON THE JEWS OF NORTH AFRICA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

Rabbi Adam Rubin

The Shoah was at its murderous worst in places where the Nazi regime and its close allies were physically present, and for the most part that means the European continent. However, Jews in North Africa were also deeply impacted by the rise of totalitarianism in Europe. In the 1930s, the Nazi government tried to spark anti-colonial Arab uprisings against the British and these efforts to influence the Arab world continued during the Second World War, sometimes leading to anti-Jewish violence; moreover, Vichy France (with German cooperation) fiercely persecuted Jews in Algeria and Tunisia. This talk will explore this little-known aspect of the Shoah and its implication for Jewish life both during and immediately after the war.

Rabbi Rubin is a pulpit rabbi in the Conservative Movement since he was ordained in 2014. Before embarking on a second career as a rabbi, he received his doctorate in modern Jewish history from UCLA and was a member of the faculty at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles for over ten years. His passion for Jewish religious and community life played a key role in his decision to leave academia to become a rabbi. He is currently the rabbi of Shaare Zion Beth-El Congregation in Montreal.

2:30-4:00 (B223)

JEWS RACIALIZATION AND CONTEMPORARY ANTISEMITISM

Mara Lee Grayson

Existing identity categories (such as religion, race, ethnicity, or nationality) do not fully account for the experiences of Jewish people. These gaps complicate

efforts to address the recent rise in antisemitism, especially on college and university campuses. In this talk, Mara Lee Grayson highlights the historical and contemporary dynamics of Jewish racialization, explores the impacts of racialization on Jews today, and offers strategies for being responsive to Jewish students' identities in various educational contexts.

Dr. Grayson is a researcher, writer, and educator specializing in antisemitism and racism in higher education. She is the author or editor of five books, including *Antisemitism and the White Supremacist Imaginary: Conflations and Contradictions in Composition and Rhetoric*, *Challenging Antisemitism: Lessons from Literacy Classrooms*, and *The Gendered Transaction of Whiteness: White Women in Educational Spaces*. Grayson has facilitated workshops at academic institutions across the United States and has designed and led initiatives within multiple professional organizations to improve the experiences of Jewish students and educators. A previously tenured faculty member in the California State University system, she currently works as Director of Content development for the Campus Climate Initiative at Hillel International.

4:00-5:30 (B223)

THE NAZIFICATION OF GERMAN MEDICINE

Renee Karp

Long before Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor and other death camps became the infamous killing centers of the Holocaust, programs for the murder of individuals deemed "unworthy of life" were well underway in Germany and Austria. The German medical establishment (medical faculties at prestigious universities, professional associations, professors and practitioners) wholeheartedly embraced the Nazi theories of "scientific racism" and "Aryan Master Race." Doctors eagerly participated in killing patients born with various congenital conditions. From these "euthanasia" programs, doctors went on to key positions in facilitating and administering the death camps and in so doing, not only besmirched the medical profession but also betrayed colleagues (Jewish and non-Jewish alike) who sought to alleviate human suffering.

Renee has been teaching in the English department of Vanier College for the past 35 years. She has long been involved in Holocaust Education helping to initiate the Holocaust Symposium at Vanier. She recently published her first novel *Fathers' Children*, based on her late father's remarkable life and insightful understanding of the forces of hate and heroism during the Shoah.

Wednesday, April 2

10:00-11:30 (B223)

CANADIAN EXPERIENCE OF ANTISEMITISM

Zach Sadowski

Antisemitism has been called one of the world's oldest forms of hatred, dating back more than 2,000 years in the archeological record to Greek and Roman sources. Tragically, this type of hate continues to thrive today in the 21st century, with many of the same myths and tropes continuing to be perpetuated. This session will look at patterns of antisemitism evidenced from antiquity to present day, discussing how to identify this form of hate and suggesting ways in which to address it in our world today.

As the Director of Antisemitism Programming and Outreach, Zach Sadowski is responsible for workshops that fulfill the mandates of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs at organizations of all sizes. The goal of these workshops is to provide a general understanding of historic and contemporary antisemitism and how these are connected. Prior to joining FSWC, Zach had a diverse professional background featuring a mix of corporate and Jewish non-profit experiences. Zach's current work at FSWC focuses on fostering conversations that challenge participants to think about how they can be an ally to their Jewish colleagues, friends, and to the broader community. Zach also supports FSWC's broader goal of building a more inclusive and respectful society through other workshops and outreach initiatives.

** With support from the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Centre*

12:00-1:30 pm (F216)

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATION SERVICE

In conjunction with the Holocaust Education and Genocide Prevention Foundation and Vanier Hillel

1:30-3:00 (B223)

SURVIVED TO TELL: BE THE WITNESS

Aviv Kurnas

This session demonstrates the use of innovative virtual reality (VR) technology with powerful personal stories, providing a unique experience that fosters understanding of the October 7 events through immersive storytelling.

Aviv Kurnas is ISRAEL-is' first North American Branch Director. Prior to this role Aviv spent time in Brooklyn NY at the Jewish Agency and has developed and spearheaded dozens of delegations, to the US, Canada and Mexico for the Global Division at ISRAEL-is.

1:30-4:00 (C305)

WILL THE SECOND GENERATION PLEASE RISE: A DOCUMENTARY ABOUT INTER-GENERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

Deena Dlusy-Apel and Max Beer

In this session, Deena and Max present their documentary *Will the Second Generation Please Rise* which examines how the children of survivors address what happened to their parents through their own poetry, prose, film, and artwork. They also share the effects of trauma growing up in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Deena and Max, both long-time high school teachers, started their retirement by going back to school! Deena received an MA in Art Education and proceeded to teach part-time at Concordia in this field. Both she and Max were affiliates at the Oral History Department at Concordia and interviewed many Holocaust survivors. For the past 15 years they have been working together making film documentaries.

Thursday, April 3

8:30-10:00 (B223)

THE FORGOTTEN REFUGEES Film screening

In the 1950s, Jews from all over the Middle East and North Africa abandoned the places where their communities had lived for hundreds if not thousands of years. They left behind their livelihood and property and suddenly became refugees.

For decades, many Jews who fled their homelands never shared their experiences of being forced into exile but in “The Forgotten Refugees” several Jewish Refugees told their stories, in some cases for the first time.

10:00-11:30

SURVIVING THE FARHUD: THE JEWISH COMMUNITY AND THE HOLOCAUST IN BAGHDAD

Sami Sourani

This talk will offer a brief overview of the origins of the Jewish community of Babylon and delve more deeply into that community's modern history in Iraq with a particular emphasis on the Farhud (pogrom related to the Holocaust) of 1941.

Sami Sourani was a child during the Farhud. He left Iraq in 1950 during the exodus of Jews from Arab lands. In 1963 he arrived in Canada, eventually joining the Ministry of Defense Production. He was awarded the Confederation Medal for his contribution to the NAFTA negotiations and was recognized for his support of Canadian small business. After his 38-year career in public service, Sami has dedicated his time to spreading knowledge about history of the Middle East and its Jewish communities.

11:30-1:00 (B223)

RECONCILIATION: AUSTRIA AND THE HOLOCAUST

Maximilian Gottman

This talk reviews the role of Austria in the Holocaust and efforts it has made to reconcile with the Jewish people and other victims.

Maximilian is a 19-year-old Austrian student who is in Montreal as a member of the Austrian Service Abroad (Gedenkdienst) program. He is stationed as an intern at the Holocaust Education and Genocide Prevention Foundation since 2024 and has been conducting workshops in Montreal and surrounding areas and recently in Kuujuaq.

1:00-2:30 (B223)

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA AND RESILIENCE: THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE AND THE ARMENIAN COMMUNITY

Tanya Karibian

Tanya will present the story of the Armenian Genocide from 2 different perspectives – one from her mother's side of the family and one from her father's side. Tanya is a second-generation Canadian with a unique perspective of the Armenian Genocide. She graduated from Concordia University in Political Science.

Friday, April 4

10:00-11:30 (B223)

MEMORY, EXILE and POLITICS: THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Shant Karabajak

This talk will explore the lasting impact of the Armenian Genocide on the Armenian community and diaspora, focusing on survival, integration, generational trauma, and geopolitics. It will examine how Armenians rebuilt their identity in exile, the psychological and political consequences of genocide denial, and the ongoing struggle for recognition and justice.

Through historical analysis and contemporary reflections, the presentation will connect the Armenian experience to broader discussions on memory, human rights, and genocide prevention.

Shant Karabajak is a first-generation Armenian-Canadian activist, author, and educator. He has been deeply involved in Armenian Genocide recognition and prevention activism since 2000, focusing on education, geopolitics, and public policy. A grandchild of Armenian Genocide survivors, he has worked to bridge historical memory with diaspora integration and resilience in the 21st century. Shant holds advanced degrees in regional development, (MPhil University of Cambridge 2021) and political philosophy as well as urban studies and has contributed to various academic and advocacy initiatives, most notably the Canadian parliament's recognition of the Armenian genocide in 2004.

11:30-1:00 (B223)

RESILIENCE AND STRENGTH

Rae Gropper

Rachel Gropper was born in 1941 in the prisoner of war coal mines of

Jegorshino in the Ural Mountains, in what was then the USSR. In 1939, when Warsaw was bombed, Rae's parents, along with two uncles, decided to flee east. The Russians captured the refugees crossing their borders and send them into forced work camps. This is how Rachel's family ended up in the coal mines in the Ural Mountains. The conditions in the camp were terrible, without adequate shelter or food in sub-zero temperatures.

After being sent to Uzbekistan, Rae's family made it back to Poland after the war, then to a displaced persons camp in Austria and eventually settled in Montreal. Rae became an educator and then dean of continuing education at Vanier College, as well as VP Academic Affairs at The Michener Institute of Applied Health Sciences (now integrated into the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Toronto). After retiring she continues as a consultant with the Canadian Association of Allied Health Programs as well as to volunteer on the Board of the Holocaust Museum. She is currently the Co- President of the Montreal Holocaust Museum.

1:00-3:00 (B223)

THE KILLING ROADS

Film Screening

The Killing Roads offers an examination of the October 7, 2023, terrorist attacks along Israel's Route 232 and Highway 34, where over 250 people lost their lives in coordinated assaults. The film captures the raw emotion, courage, and resilience of survivors, first responders, and bereaved families directly impacted by the carnage.

The Symposium on the Holocaust and Genocide thanks Vanier College, specifically the staff of the Faculty of Arts, Business and Social Sciences faculty office, office of the Director General and Vanier Foundation and Communications office. Special thanks to the executive of the Vanier Hillel club. Deep gratitude to Naomi Kramer (Holocaust Education and Genocide Prevention Foundation), Gila Cotler (Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights) and Melissa Mikel (Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center) and Vanier colleagues who suggested and secured speakers.