



HHREC Partners with German School for Anne Frank Exhibition and Programs

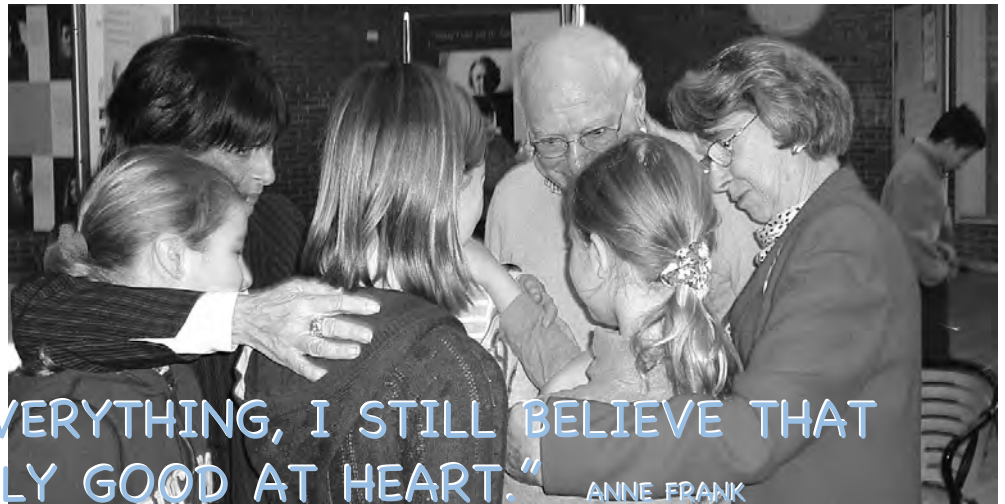
As a result of the close working relationship developed over the past 13 years with the German School in White Plains, the HHREC recently partnered with the school to present an exhibition about the life of Anne Frank. This exhibition was developed by the Anne Frank Center USA. From January 15-24, more than 800 students and their teachers from 11 schools toured the exhibition and heard first-person testimony from survivors and liberators who are members of the HHREC Speakers Bureau. The programs opened with a joint reception for the boards and invited guests from both organizations. Survivor Jack Polak set the tone for the thought-provoking evening, and Dr. Ernestine Schlant Bradley spoke about her own German childhood and subsequent life in the United States.

The significance of the exhibition's setting was not lost on any of the participants. In fact, the students and administration of the German School firmly believe that Holocaust education is an important part of their legacy. As one student said, "It's a responsibility. We can't deny it happened. But we have to make sure it doesn't happen again." Representatives from the United Nations underscored this fact by discussing the importance of creating a worldwide "culture of accountability" in the face of current and recent genocide in Darfur and Rwanda, as part of the school's annual Holocaust commemoration day.

The HHREC gratefully acknowledges the funders who made this programming possible: the German School New York, the Polak Family, and Harris Markhoff of the Irwin Weiner Charitable Foundation. We also thank Udo Boehinger, Carol Klessen and Gunther Zloch and the students and faculty of the German School for so generously opening their doors for this important endeavor.

The courage and humanity of the survivors and liberators made indelible impressions, especially on the German students. The docents who volunteered their time to interpret the exhibition and pose questions to the touring students are also to be congratulated. We thank the survivors, liberators and docents: Fred and Ruth Bachner, Bettina Graf, Sel Hubert, Betty Knoop, Ed Lessing, Lola Margulies, Alan Moskin, Beth Quinn, Lillyan Rosenberg, Jay Sommer, Bernhard Storch, and Edee Tenser. Susan Rothschild demonstrated tireless dedication as she coordinated all the volunteers' visits without missing a beat.

Top Right: Docent Edee Tenser and Holocaust Survivors Susan Rothschild, Sel Hubert and Jay Sommer speaking with students; Left: School visitors and volunteers; Lower Left: Yvonne Simons, Executive Director Anne Frank Center USA; Dr. Marlene Warsbawski Yabalom, Director of Education HHREC; Dr. Ernestine Schlant Bradley, Hans Westra, Executive Director Anne Frank House, Holland; Kleis Broekhuizen, Managing Director Anne Frank House, Holland; Richard Laster, Chairman and Donna Coben, Executive Director HHREC.



"...IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING, I STILL BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE ARE REALLY GOOD AT HEART."
ANNE FRANK

7th Annual Human Rights Institute For High School Student Leaders

On March 12th students and staff from 26 area high schools, numbering well over 300, brought Manhattanville's campus alive in an effort to educate themselves and their peers about the human rights crises of the 21st century. They grappled with the complexities and gravity of local and global events with the determination of true leaders.

The day began with a multi-media presentation by Garry Norman and Michel Chikwanine, representatives of Leaders Today. Their program is dedicated to teaching young people how to improve the welfare of their peers worldwide. The moment in which Michel revealed that he had been kidnapped as a 5-year-old, and forced to join a rebel unit in the Congo as a child soldier was so painful that the audience held its breath. Michel's escape from almost certain death, and the violence he later witnessed against his family led to his journey to "be the change" he desired to see in the world around him.

Juniors and seniors from 15 high schools led 21 workshops about human rights concerns. In these workshops, sophomores were educated by their peers about issues as diverse as poverty in the U.S.A., homelessness, HIV/AIDS, homophobia, leadership qualities and small groups making a difference to child labor, fair trade, blood diamonds, dirty gold, the treatment of women in refugee camps and in the Middle East, conflicts in Burma and the Congo, the medical supply crisis and torture at Guantanamo.

This year, a workshop in Action Planning was scheduled for the teachers in order to provide an educational forum for the educators who play a pivotal role in the development of the students' leadership skills.

After lunch, 21 groups of students settled down to create Action Plans, and by hour's end each group had a solid, strategic approach to begin to respond to their human rights issue. Their work truly reflects the goals of the Student Institute as it combines: Knowledge, Empowerment, Recommitment and Action.

It is because of the Human Rights Institute 2008 that we can look forward with pride and confidence to this year's Upstander Day commemoration on May 29.



Keynote speaker Michel Chikwanine, Leaders Today



Donald Landis, HHREC Board Member; Donna Coben, HHREC Executive Director; Garry Norman, Leaders Today; Richard Laster, HHREC Chairman; Michel Chikwanine, Leaders Today; Dr. Marlene Warsbawski Yabalom, HHREC Director of Education.

Save the Dates:

Thursday, April 3, 2008 4:00-6:30 pm

Focus Seminar

The Responsibility to Protect: The Way Forward
Professor Sheri Rosenberg

Thursday, April 10, 2008 7:30 pm

Community Interfaith Holocaust Commemoration
St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, Bronxville
Keynote speakers Ina and Jack Polak

Wednesday, April 30, 2008 7:30 pm

Distinguished Lecture and Yom Hashoah
Commemoration

*The Shattering of Law: Legal Systems and their
Role in the Holocaust*
Professor Richard Weisberg

Sunday, May 4, 2008 11 am

Garden of Remembrance Yom Hashoah Observance
Seeds of Hope

Keynote speaker Rabbi Rick Jacobs
Westchester Reformed Temple
Garden of Remembrance,
148 Martine Ave. White Plains
Rain or Shine

Monday, May 5, 2008 7:30 pm

No Way Out – Evening Program
Humanities Theater at Purchase College

Thursday, May 29, 2008

Upstander Day -
Proclaimed by County Executive Andrew Spano
*High School Students take up a cause
where they can make a difference.*

*unless otherwise noted, all events take place in Reid Hall, Manhattanville College Admission is free, but reservations are required for groups. We gratefully acknowledge Carol and Michael Lowenstein, Dolly Maass, Lee and Richard Laster and Office of State Senator Vincent Leibell/NYS Dept. of Education for their support of the Distinguished Lecture Series.

In Brief...

Human Rights Commissioner Joins HHREC Board

The HHREC is pleased to announce that Delores Scott Brathwaite, Executive Director of the Westchester County Human Rights Commission, has joined our board. Mrs. Brathwaite is responsible for the administration and enforcement of the County's Human Rights Law and is the guiding force of that agency's education and outreach initiatives. An attorney, advocate, mediator, and arbitrator, Mrs. Brathwaite lectures on employment law, human rights, social justice and diversity issues. Mrs. Brathwaite states, "The issues of human rights continue to be critical in our efforts of having a unified society. I am pleased to be part of the HHREC and look forward to our collaborative efforts especially on educational initiatives."



DECISIONS

by Brett H. Bowden

I am what I am today Because of the decisions I made yesterday I'll be what I'll be tomorrow Because of the decisions I make today

These words are tacked to the bulletin board in my classroom, right behind my desk. Just as I said they would when I made the decision to become a teacher. They exist as a general challenge to my students – and when you think about it, just about everyone who encounters them.

Decisions...

September 11th helped me decide to become a teacher. A couple of years after I did, a senior at Croton-Harmon High School helped me decide to establish the **Human Rights Task Force** – an extra-curricular club that believes that *the purpose of freedom is to safeguard it for others*. And if she didn't stop me in the stairway my third week of school five years ago, I'd be telling you about my experiences advising the Sailing Club...

Decisions...

Shortly after becoming “human rights” guy, I decided to act upon an invitation to bring 8 sophomores to the **Human Rights Student Institute** (sponsored by the *Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center*). Actually this wasn't a tough decision as I've always had a passion for history and human behavior, with a particular interest in the Holocaust and power groups.



“...the words of Mark Twain, which have become in many ways, my mantra: *“Always do right. You'll gratify some people – and astonish the rest.”*”

See, I've been a student of the Holocaust since I was in high school, when I took one of the first elective courses on the subject taught by Stuart Elenko at the Bronx High School of Science. A few years later, at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst, I decided upon a History class with Professor David Wyman – who had written “Paper Walls” and “The Abandonment of the Jews” about the U.S. response, or the lack thereof, to the Holocaust. It truly resonated when he noted that the Holocaust wasn't a Jewish tragedy but a *human* tragedy.

Decisions...

Back to the Student Institute... What could be better than assembling 250 sophomores in workshops aimed at experiencing the lessons of the Holocaust, firsthand?! The energy at this

event is palpable, so much so that I decided to join the Educators Planning Committee (EPC) and help them with the important work they do. Our primary goal: to *facilitate the decision for students and communities to evolve from being bystanders to, of course... upstanders*.

Since then, I've worked to create “Upstander Days”- in my school, community and throughout the neighboring counties; to offer resources and present provocative learning opportunities for students of all ages. I've had the honor of mingling with scholars and survivors, motivators and the motivated, upstanders and bystanders...

I will never forget how inspiring twenty-one year old Joe Opatowski was when we heard his keynote at the Institute. Or how profoundly sad I felt that Monday morning upon learning of his fatal automobile accident the day after he spoke in Croton. While my principal and I were deciding the best way to relay the news to the student body, alas... the power of technology beat us to it.

Decisions...

This Fall I taught my first elective, entitled **Inhumanity Facing History**. It was, without question, the pedagogical offspring of my passion, training and life experience. For twenty weeks I evolved along with my class on a journey where we could be teacher or student at any given time. I learned as much as I taught – which is saying a lot. And ultimately that's what it's all about: deciding to become a lifelong learner.

In my vision for the HHREC, I see us creating a **Motivational Speaker's Bureau** comprised entirely of local student upstanders: *high school students and alum who've walked the walk and are adept at talking the talk to their younger peers*. I've seen and heard what our young people are doing and I assure you, it is nothing short of amazing.

So, this is where I've decided to put my efforts today because this is what I know we'll need tomorrow. I'll close with the words of Mark Twain, which have become in many ways, my mantra: *“Always do right. You'll gratify some people – and astonish the rest.”*

Brett Bowden is an Educators Planning Committee member at HHREC and a teacher at the Croton Harmon High School.

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Holocaust Curriculum Video Conference with International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem

With empathy, scholarship, and even a bit of humor, the first Curriculum Video Conference between the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center and the International School for Holocaust Studies of Yad Vashem took place on Sunday, February 3, in the SUNY Purchase Library. This successful venture into shared pedagogy was initiated by Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom and Ms. Richelle Budd-Caplan of Yad Vashem. The Video Conference revealed our mutual commitment to an empathetic study of the lives of all of the people who were a part of the Holocaust.

As Ms. Leah Roshkovsky discussed the challenges of sustaining a meaningful course of study of the Holocaust with Israeli stu-

Holocaust material must always be "appropriate to the students' cognitive and emotional levels" in order to create and sustain a feeling of empathy and ward off the attitude which has been called Holocaust Fatigue.

dents, she aptly described how they cringed at one more lecture about the facts and figures of the devastation in the camps, and sought comfort in isolating themselves by thinking that the events of more than 60 years ago no longer pertained to their lives. HHREC audience members nodded in recognition of a similar attitude prevalent in many American classrooms.

It was with great satisfaction to hear that Holocaust Curriculum development in Israel took a turn we know well at HHREC. Through our own development of an integrated/interdisciplinary Holocaust Curriculum for use on the secondary education level (www.holocausteducationctr.org), as well as through the production of the film about our local survivors, *Testimony of the Human Spirit*, we can agree with Ms. Leah Roshkovsky in reference to the need to combine the maps and documents delineating historical events with the literature and testimony of the people who were living through these events. The teachers' responsibilities must be to use historically accurate material which includes resources delineating the social and psychological aspects of the Holocaust in order to hope to "grow lessons out of the Holocaust." Holocaust material must always be "appropriate to the students' cognitive and emotional levels" in order to create and sustain a feeling of empathy and ward off the attitude which has been called, Holocaust Fatigue.

It is through the questions about the bridges between life during the Holocaust and life in the 21st century whereby a student can begin to see himself / herself in a decision making capacity. Begin to understand the experiences of the victims, the bystanders, the perpetrators, and the rescuers of the Holocaust and use that understanding in his/her own life today. The Video Conference was successful in so many respects. We at HHREC have much to offer Yad Vashem's International School and they indeed can work with us to further our Holocaust Curriculum development. It is not a surprise; it is a validation of each other's achievements.

The Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center is an interfaith, not-for-profit organization serving Westchester, Fairfield, and Putnam Counties.

Our Mission is to enhance the teaching and learning of the lessons of the Holocaust and right of all people to be treated with dignity and respect.

We encourage students to speak up and act against all forms of bigotry and prejudice.

Chappaqua Middle School Visit to the HHREC

As part of the HHREC's outreach initiative to strengthen our ties with regional schools and promote our mission to educate young people in the lessons of the Holocaust and Human Rights, ninety 8th grade students, 3 teachers and 7 adults from the Seven Bridges Middle School in Chappaqua attended one of our programs at Manhattanville College on March 4th, 2008.

The students viewed the segment of our film, *Testimony of the Human Spirit*, entitled "Persecution and Segregation." Holocaust survivor Dr. Lola Margulies, a member of our Speakers Bureau, and a witness-participant in the film, spoke to the students about her harrowing experiences during the Holocaust when she was a child. The students were able to speak candidly to Dr. Margulies during the Q & A period following her remarks. Both students and staff were fully engaged during this 80 minute program, and left the HHREC with a vital perspective between events of the past and their lives today.

This program is an important vehicle for outreach, and also a mechanism to introduce educators to our Center and the educational resources we offer to the public. For more information, contact Dr. Marlene W. Yahalom, Director of Education, MWY1220@aol.com, 914 696-0738.