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“In a world still trembling”:

American Jewish philanthropy and the shaping of Holocaust survivor narratives
in postwar America (1945 – 1953)

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in History

by

Rachel Beth Deblinger

2014

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

“In a world still trembling”:

American Jewish philanthropy and the shaping of Holocaust survivor narratives
in postwar America (1945 – 1953)

by

Rachel Beth Deblinger

Doctor of Philosophy in History

University of California, Los Angeles, 2014

Professor David N. Myers, Chair

The insistence that American Jews did not respond to the Holocaust has long defined the postwar period as one of silence and inaction. In fact, American Jewish communal organizations waged a robust response to the Holocaust that addressed the immediate needs of survivors in the aftermath of the war and collected, translated, and transmitted stories about the Holocaust and its survivors to American Jews. Fundraising materials that employed narratives about Jewish persecution under Nazism reached nearly every Jewish home in America and philanthropic programs aimed at aiding survivors in the postwar period engaged Jews across the politically, culturally, and socially diverse American Jewish landscape. This study examines the fundraising pamphlets, letters, posters, short films, campaign appeals, radio programs, pen-pal letters, and advertisements that make up the material record of this communal response to the Holocaust and,

in so doing, examines how American Jews came to know stories about Holocaust survivors in the early postwar period.

This kind of cultural history expands our understanding of how the Holocaust became part of an American Jewish discourse in the aftermath of the war by revealing that philanthropic efforts produced multiple survivor representations while defining American Jews as saviors of Jewish lives and a Jewish future. Paying particular attention to visual and material sources that both reflected and generated communal knowledge about the Holocaust, this work affirms how important the specific context of postwar America was in shaping this initial encounter. As such, American Jewish communal organizations integrated core American motifs such as thanksgiving, freedom, and hope into their narratives about Holocaust survivors, rendering stories of refuge and tragedy into accounts of survival and triumph. This work complicates historical assumptions about postwar silence and inaction by recognizing that philanthropy served as an important site of memory construction and a meaningful way for American Jews to respond to the Holocaust.

The dissertation of Rachel Beth Deblinger is approved.

Peter Baldwin

Hasia R. Diner

Todd Presner

David N. Myers, Committee Chair

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2014

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- “Common Threads: Clothing Drives, the Cold War and Early Holocaust Narratives,” Association for Jewish Studies Conference, Chicago, IL, December 2012.
- “David P. Boder: Holocaust Memory in Displaced Persons Camps” in *After the Holocaust: challenging the myth of silence*, ed. David Cesarani, and Eric J. Sundquist, (London: Routledge, 2012) 115 - 126.
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- “Broadcasting Survivor Voices: Listening to Holocaust Narratives on Postwar American Radio,” Aftermath: Sites and Sources of History and Memory Conference, Monash University, Melbourne, Australia, August 2013.
- “Saving our Survivors: American Jewish Fundraising in the Post-Holocaust World,” Association for Jewish Studies Conference, Boston, MA, December 2013.
- “Shaping Survival: American Jewish Fundraising and the construction of Survivor narratives in postwar America,” Absorbing Encounters: Constructing American Jewry in the Post-Holocaust Decades Conference, University of Maryland, College Park, MD, March 2014.
- “America’s Next Pilgrims: Holocaust Survivors and the Fight for Immigration Reform in Postwar America,” Organization for American Historians Conference, Atlanta, GA, April 2014.

Introduction

This study begins with a question of epistemology: how do we know what we know about the Holocaust? We have often been told that, as Americans, we learned about the Holocaust through two primary sources – German archival materials and the eyewitness accounts of Holocaust survivors. For decades, these two sources told opposing stories: the archives told the story of the perpetrators, and the survivors told the story of the victims. Not until Saul Friedländer’s groundbreaking, two-volume study of the Holocaust, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, were the two streams of knowledge combined into one narrative account.¹ Friedländer’s intervention in writing Holocaust history combined the voice of the perpetrators with that of the victims so that we could gain a glimpse of the process of decision-making and the lived experiences that resulted from such legalized persecution. As Friedländer explains, “The ‘history of the Holocaust’ cannot be limited only to a recounting of German policies, decisions, and measures that led to this most systematic and sustained of genocides; it must include the reactions (and at times the initiatives) of the surrounding world and the attitudes of the victims, for the fundamental reason that the events we call the Holocaust represent a totality defined by this very convergence of distinct elements.”² This approach, which juxtaposed Nazi policies with

¹ Saul Friedländer, *Nazi Germany and the Jews*, (New York: HarperCollins, 1997) and *The Years of Extermination: Nazi Germany and the Jews, 1939-1945*, (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007).

² Friedländer, *The Years of Extermination*, xv.

local particularities, and the “lightening flashes” of victim voices, advanced the possibilities for knowing the Holocaust.³

Yet, popular engagement with the Holocaust still prioritizes the voices of Holocaust survivors through postwar testimony. Holocaust memory, as opposed to Holocaust history, has been defined through these first-hand accounts. The tension between these two approaches forces us to ask what should be remembered and how it should be represented.⁴ Despite the confrontation with memory that remains problematic for Holocaust historians, testimony has become, as Dominick LaCapra asserts, “a privileged mode of access to the past and its traumatic occurrences.”⁵ This is especially true at public sites of Holocaust memory such as museums and through curricula that invite survivors as witnesses into American schools across the country. That Americans have come to know about the Holocaust largely through survivor testimony is thanks to the prevalence of these forms of memory as much as to Elie Wiesel’s dictum that only survivors can speak of a Holocaust experience.⁶

³ Ibid, xxvi.

⁴ Scholarly literature about the tension between Holocaust memory and history, as defined by the journal *History & Memory*, began at the end of the 1980s and exploded in the 1990s. See, in particular: Dominick La Capra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1998); Pierre Nora, “Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Memoire,” *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989) Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory, 7-24; Saul Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the “Final Solution,”* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992); Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003); Giorgio Agamban, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, translated by Daniel Heller-Roazen, (New York: Zone Books, 2002). The tension between history and memory in Jewish history is most profoundly established in Yosef Yerushalmi, *Zakhor, Jewish History and Jewish Memory* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982).

⁵ LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, 11.

⁶ This idea has found multiple expressions in Wiesel’s writings. In the 1962 novel, *The Accident*, Wiesel writes that survivors must be the “messenger of the dead, among the living.” At the same time, Wiesel argues that those who were not there can never understand. At the April 22, 1993 Opening Ceremony for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Wiesel said, “it is not because I cannot explain that you won’t understand, it is because you won’t understand that I cannot explain.” Elie Wiesel, *The Accident*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1962) 45, Elie Wiesel’s remarks, April 22, 1993, Accessed March 14, 2014, <http://www.ushmm.org/research/ask-a-research-question/frequently-asked-questions/wiesel>.

Therefore, it may be surprising to discover that in the immediate postwar period, American Jews first came to know about the Holocaust not through historical works or testimonies of survivors, but through the organized efforts of American Jewish communal groups. We have long been led to believe that knowledge of and engagement with the Holocaust was delayed for an extended period of time in this country. But, in fact, fundraising materials that employed narratives about Jewish persecution under Nazism reached nearly every Jewish home in America, while philanthropic programs aimed at aiding survivors in the postwar period engaged Jews across the politically, culturally, and socially diverse American Jewish landscape. Additionally, the work of Jewish organizations was advertised on radio and in newspapers for both Jewish and broader American audiences. As such, it was through American media and mediators that American Jews first learned about the Holocaust in the late 1940s and early 1950s.

This dissertation explores these forms of early Holocaust memory and considers how American Jewish communal organizations collected, translated, and transmitted survivor narratives for American audiences in the aftermath of the war. By seriously examining the public materials used by organizations to raise funds, motivate volunteerism, and influence political reform, I argue that philanthropy was both an important site of memory construction and a meaningful way for American Jews to respond to the Holocaust in the aftermath of the war. As such, this work joins a growing body of literature that studies how the Holocaust became part of American Jewish discourse amidst Jewish movement to the suburbs, the emerging Cold War, developments in new entertainment technologies, and the assertion of American dominance in

the world.⁷ The organized American Jewish community sought to engage American Jews in response to the Holocaust by employing stories about survivors in fundraising pamphlets, letters, posters, short films, campaign events, radio programs, pen-pal letters, and advertisements. These kinds of materials make up the bulk of the sources examined in this study as they reflect the public facing narratives organizations used to transmit their appeals to American Jews. Close reading of such ephemera, in addition to analysis of internal organizational communications, reveals that survivor needs were often secondary to institutional interests and that these narratives reflect American concerns as much as the challenges Jewish survivors faced in postwar Europe. In fact, the early survivor narratives crafted through organizational appeals depict multiple survivor representations while defining American Jews as saviors of Jewish lives and a Jewish future.

As American Jews responded to the Holocaust through philanthropic means, they characterized survivors variously as helpless victims, heroic survivors, enemies of totalitarianism, potential American citizens, and pioneers in Palestine and Israel. These representations were constructed for a variety of goals — not only humanitarian aid in postwar

⁷ The postwar period was a time of great transformation for American Jewry, as they moved out of cities, returned to synagogues, and integrated into mainstream America. For a broad history of American Jewish life in the postwar period, see Riv-Ellen Prell, “Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance: American Jewish life from the end of World War II to the Six Day War,” *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc L. Raphael, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 114-141. See also, the collected essays in Deborah Dash Moore, ed., *American Jewish Identity Politics*, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2008), 1-18, and Edward Shapiro, *A Time for Healing: American Jewry Since World War II*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992). The postwar period has been called a golden age for American Jews, an idea challenged by Hasia Diner, see Arthur Goren, “A Golden Decade for American Jews: 1945-1955,” in *The American Jewish Experience*, ed. Jonathan D. Sarna (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1986), 294–313 and Hasia Diner, *The Jews of the United States*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 259 – 304. For more about the particular relationship between suburbanization, “becoming white” and ‘silence’ after the Holocaust, see Karen Brodtkin, *How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says About Race in America* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 1998) and Eric L. Goldstein, *The Price of Whiteness: Jews, Race, and American Identity*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006). For more about the development of entertainment technologies and American Jews, see Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust*, (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

Europe, but also support for Jewish immigration to America and to justify a Jewish state. Each of these ambitions depended upon American Jewish action, either through financial or material donations or volunteer efforts, and organizations deployed these various survivor identities to mobilize American Jews. To do so, American Jewish philanthropic publicity transformed survivors into Pilgrims and Patriots and inserted the Empire State Building and Benjamin Franklin into Holocaust narratives, using American idioms and tropes to render stories of refuge and tragedy into accounts of survival and triumph. The following chapters document this process of narrative transformation and trace the use of American and Jewish motifs through a variety of organizational projects and publicity.

This kind of cultural history is attentive to the material and visual sources that made public the efforts and ideals of American Jewish communal organizations and exposes the robust response these organizations waged in the aftermath of the war. The material record of American Jewish communal life thus provides a new way of understanding what American Jews first knew about Jewish persecution under Nazism. Organizational publicity both reflected and generated communal knowledge about the Holocaust and introduced American Jews across the country to the figure we now recognize as a Holocaust survivor.

In calling attention to the ways in which American Jewish philanthropic efforts shaped narratives about the Holocaust and its survivors, I am working outside the norms of what is considered Holocaust memory. Much of the cultural ephemera, advertisements, and public relations material I examine here were buried in Jewish organizational archives or isolated in audio-visual collections and nearly all of them were considered unrelated to the study of Holocaust memory. Yet, these materials provide an important source for understanding that

American Jews not only confronted the Holocaust in the immediate aftermath of the war, but defined their relationship to survivors through humanitarian intervention.

That this dissertation so closely examines the immediate postwar period is already a statement of historiographical loyalties. I follow in the wake of Hasia Diner's work, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, and, as such, add to the growing challenge to the "Myth of Silence."⁸ Diner's work acts to dismantle the received knowledge that silence followed the Holocaust, a claim that defined both scholarly and popular understanding of the postwar period. Diner traces this idea back to the 1960s, when young Jews argued that the "Jewish establishment" had "blotted out the memory of the Holocaust because it jarred with the communal agenda of accommodation and assimilation."⁹ By 1980, Diner argues, these accusations found their way into Jewish scholarship, and we can begin to cite criticism of American Jewry's manipulation of Holocaust memory in Leon Jick's 1981 essay "The Holocaust: Its Uses and Abuses in the American Public."¹⁰

⁸ Hasia R. Diner, *We remember with reverence and love: American Jews and the myth of silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009). Other works that document early Holocaust memory and complicate the attempts to collect and create Holocaust memory in the postwar period include the collected essays in David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist, ed., *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, (London: Routledge, 2012); Kirsten Lise Fermaglich, *American dreams and Nazi nightmares: early Holocaust consciousness and liberal America, 1957 – 1965*, (Waltham, MA: Brandeis Univ. Press, 2006); Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record!: Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe*, (New York, N.Y: Oxford University Press, 2012); Alan Rosen, *The wonder of their voices: the 1946 Holocaust interviews of David Boder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Jürgen Matthäus, *Approaching an Auschwitz survivor: holocaust testimony and its transformations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); and Beth B. Cohen, *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2007). The forthcoming dissertation from Mark Smith (UCLA) about Philip Friedman and his cohort of Yiddish historians will also shed light on how the Holocaust was known in the immediate aftermath of the war.

⁹ Hasia R. Diner, "Origins and Meanings of the Myth of Silence," in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London: Routledge, 2012), 192 – 201, 194 – 195.

¹⁰ Leon Jick, "The Holocaust: Its Uses and Abuses in the American Public," in *Yad Vashem Studies* 14 (1981).

It is not coincidental that Jick's essay appeared just after the establishment of the Yale Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, a breakthrough moment for the creation and collection of video taped survivor accounts, which have become the primary means of preserving survivor testimony and sacred sites of memory.¹¹ Such institutional efforts to collect and preserve Holocaust memory, which began in the 1980s and surged in the 1990s, sparked scholarly attention that resulted in clusters of literature about Holocaust testimony, commemoration, and Americanization.¹² In the mid 1990s, scholars sought to understand the flood of cultural production about the Holocaust and address the ethical ramifications of such public engagement with Holocaust history.¹³ But, it is the sharp criticism of the popularization of Holocaust memory that is the most relevant here, because scholars, including Norman

¹¹ For more about the development of the Yale Holocaust Testimony archive, see Geoffrey H. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), particularly 133 – 150 and Geoffrey H. Hartman, *Holocaust Remembrance: The Shapes of Memory*, (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1994).

¹² Discussions about testimony cross disciplinary boundaries and include literary scholars, psychiatrists, and historians. In addition to Hartman, *Holocaust Remembrances*, see Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust testimonies: the ruins of memory*, (New Haven: Yale University Press: 1991) and *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, (New York: Routledge, 1991); and Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History*, (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1998). More recent additions to the debate include Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); and Annette Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006). Historians are less well represented in this debate, but Christopher Browning has been vocal about his use of testimony for historical discovery, particularly in Christopher R. Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co, 2010). Discussion about Holocaust commemoration and memorialization has largely been about memorials and museums, particularly the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. See James E. Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993) and *At Memory's Edge: After-images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create America's Holocaust Museum* (New York: Viking, 1995); and Dan Stone, "Memory, Memorials, and Museums," in *The Historiography of the Holocaust*, ed. Dan Stone (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 508 - 532.

¹³ The Historian's Debate is a particularly public example of how concerns about writing Holocaust history determined ethical debates. Saul Friedlander and Martin Broszat, "A Controversy about the Historicization of National Socialism," *Yad Vashem Studies* 19 (1988): 1-47. See also, Dominick LaCapra, "Revisiting the Historians' Debate: Mourning and Genocide," *History & Memory*, Vol. 9, No. 1/2, Fall 1997, 80-112 and Peter Baldwin, *Reworking the Past: Hitler, the Holocaust, and the Historians' Debate*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1990).

Finkelstein, Peter Novick, and Alan Mintz, constructed the idea that American Jewish leaders were responsible for a pronounced silence after the Holocaust.

In 1997, Norman Finkelstein published an essay in *New Left Review* that implicated Jewish organizations in a plot to popularize the Holocaust for the benefit of American Jewish support for Israel.¹⁴ In the years that followed, Peter Novick published *The Holocaust in American Life* (1999), Finkelstein published a book length version of his argument as *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (2000), and Alan Mintz published *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory* (2001), each of which argued that Jewish organizations marginalized Holocaust memory in America in the 1940s and 50s only to deploy its legacy for political potency in the 1960s and beyond.¹⁵ Mintz summarized the assumptions behind this school of thought in his introduction by asking:

In the depths of the 1940s and 1950s, at a time when the term *Holocaust* as we now use it had not been invented, when survivors were silent and stigmatized, and when the destruction of European Jewry did not figure in public discourse, who could have predicted that the Holocaust would move so forcefully to the center of American culture?¹⁶

In the wake of these publications, the “orthodoxy” of this perceived silence spread across America and Europe, both in scholarly and public circles.¹⁷ As David Cesarani summarized,

¹⁴ Norman Finkelstein, “Daniel Jonah Goldhagen’s ‘Crazy’ Thesis,” *New Left Review*, 224 (July/August 1997), 39 – 87.

¹⁵ Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1999); Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering*, (London and New York; Verso, 2000); Alan Mintz, *Popular Culture and the Shaping of Holocaust Memory in America*, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Mintz, *Popular Culture*, 3.

¹⁷ David Cesarani, Introduction to *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London: Routledge, 2012), 3. Other works in the 1990s that supported and accepted the claim of silence include, David S. Wyman, ed., *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Alvin Rosenfeld, “The Assault on Holocaust Memory,” in *American Jewish Year Book: 2001* (New York: American Jewish Committee, 2001) 3-20; and Judith Miller, *One, By One, By One: Facing the Holocaust*

these scholars promoted the “notion that after the war there was a ‘silence’ about the attempted annihilation of the Jews until it was in the interests of the organized Jewish community in America to break it by ‘constructing’ what we know today as the historical event and cultural subject called ‘the Holocaust.’”¹⁸

A decade after this work was published Hasia Diner attacked the dominance of this “false history.”¹⁹ A conference at UCLA in 2009 took up Diner’s central challenge and the published proceedings lay out a broad approach to this new research ambition, revealing “the sheer volume of talking, recording, writing, representation in various media, and publishing that went on from 1945 well into the 1950s.”²⁰ The collected essays exposed memorial and documentation projects from the immediate postwar period, and the works that followed this 2009 meeting have detailed varied responses to the Holocaust in the aftermath of the war, including the earliest attempts of survivors to collect their own accounts and David Boder’s 1946 oral history project.²¹ Scholarly

(New York: Simon and Schuster, 1991). A more recent addition to the list includes Daniel Levy and Natan Szaider, *The Holocaust and Memory in the Global Age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006). For a more complete assessment of the Myth of Silence, see Diner, *We remember with reverence and love*, 4-9.

¹⁸ Cesarani, Introduction to *After the Holocaust*, 2.

¹⁹ Diner, “Origins and Meanings of the Myth of Silence,” 192.

²⁰ The conference, “The Myth of Silence: Who Spoke about the Holocaust when?,” was held in October 2009 at UCLA. Cesarani, Introduction to *After the Holocaust*, 10.

²¹ Laura Jockusch details Historical Commissions created in France, Poland, Germany, Italy and Austria and argues that these efforts continued previous responses to Jewish tragedy in unique national contexts that limited cooperation across the continent. Jockusch, *Collect and Record*. Literary scholar David Roskies has also argued that literary responses to the Holocaust need to be understood as continuous within Jewish history. Roskies traced literature of the Holocaust back well before the Kishinev pogroms, to Lamentations and even the *Tokheha* (Rebuke) in Deuteronomy. David Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: The Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*, (Jewish Publication Society, 1989). Perhaps the most concerted effort to examine early survivor narrative has been scholarship concerned with David Boder’s 1946 oral testimony collection, a project which was considered “lost” and then “refound” in a way that echoes broader assertions of silence and lack of silence. In fact, Boder’s work offers an interesting case study for thinking about the shift in Holocaust scholarship between the mid 1990s and 2009. In 1998, Donald Niewyk edited 34 of Boder’s 109 interviews and published them in the collection *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*. Niewyk’s edits render the interviews easier to read, thus giving Boder’s work more accessibility, but, by rearranging the content, he made the interviews fit our contemporary expectations and removed the power of these interviews to serve as evidence of an earlier Holocaust discourse. Yet,

attention on the postwar period has yielded both detailed studies of memory creation and collection in the late 1940s and histories that trace the transformation of survivor narratives from the postwar until today.²² The present study seeks to build on this work by offering a close look at the postwar period and the kinds of Holocaust narratives constructed in response to the changing crises of the Jewish world.

Yet, I am also mindful of the changes in memory practice over the past (almost) 70 years and rely on the literature about survivor narratives from the 1990s. As such, the recognition that the immediate aftermath of the war was, in fact, a period of great memory creation and commemoration does not negate the need to understand why Holocaust consciousness and awareness reached such a fever pitch in the 1980s and 90s. My study, although rooted in its postwar time frame, is also a response to the “preoccupation with testimony and witnessing

by 2009, Jürgen Matthaüs published a series of articles about the testimony of Zippi (Helen) Tichauer, who had been interviewed by Boder in 1946. *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations* provided a new way for thinking about Boder’s work as part of a history of Holocaust testimony and although Matthaüs argues that Boder “got the facts wrong,” the essays recognize the changes in memory practice that altered approaches to Holocaust memory over time. In 2012, Alan Rosen published *The wonder in their voices* and, as part of the larger effort to detail postwar responses to the Holocaust, demonstrates Boder’s commitment to preserving survivor voices and making them known in postwar America. Donald L. Niewyk, *Fresh wounds: early narratives of Holocaust survival*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Jürgen Matthaüs, ed., *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and its Transformations*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), and Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Also, Rachel Deblinger, “David P. Boder: Holocaust memory in Displaced Persons camps,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London: Routledge, 2012), 115 – 126.

²² Henry Greenspan, “The Awakening of Memory: Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Holocaust, and Today,” Monna and Otto Weinmann Lecture Series, 17 May 2000, 19. Available at: <http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/publications/occasional/2001-02/paper.pdf>. Greenspan’s long history working with Holocaust survivors is described in more detail in *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History*. Other works that trace a long history of Holocaust testimony and the changes in testimony practice include Matthaüs, ed., *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor* and Wieviorka, *The Era of the Witness*. Naomi Seidman’s critique of Elie Wiesel’s *Night* similarly traces Holocaust memory construction from the postwar to a later period. Naomi Seidman, “Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage,” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 3:1 (Autumn 1996): 1-19.

that...poses special challenges to history.”²³ As such, this work is both a challenge to the “Myth of Silence” and an exploration of how survivors came to be defined in American culture.

As will be shown in the chapters ahead, American Jews in the postwar period were acutely aware of Jewish persecution under Nazism and the ongoing precariousness of Jewish lives after the war, but the kind of narratives that mobilized an organized Jewish response focused on the postwar DP world more so than the tragedies of Jewish life under Nazism. By exploring the attention paid to the postwar crisis in early Holocaust narratives, I respond to Eric Sundquist’s suggestion that, “perhaps...we have now reached the point where we can dispense with the myth of silence without dispensing with the question of silence.”²⁴ Stories about the postwar world told through Jewish communal narratives generalized Holocaust experiences and edited out the kinds of arresting details that resonate today.

Accounting for these kinds of silences, even amid the pronounced attention paid to survivors, makes clear that American Jewish organizations were more concerned with the immediate needs of survivors than with historical preservation. In the first few postwar years, Displaced Persons (DP), defined by UNRRA as all individuals displaced by the war, demanded American attention and narratives designed to generate aid focused on the most urgent suffering: postwar hunger, disease, and displacement. As liberation spread across Europe, the number of DPs rose to nearly 10 million, the majority of whom were repatriated by the occupying armies by the end of August 1945.²⁵ After August, there remained nearly 1.5 million Displaced Persons left

²³ LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz*, 11.

²⁴ Sundquist, “Silence reconsidered,” in *After the Holocaust: Challenging the Myth of Silence*, ed. David Cesarani and Eric J. Sundquist (London: Routledge, 2012), 202 – 216, 213-214.

²⁵ Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 11-12. For a detailed description of the interaction between DPs,

in occupied territories who were housed in makeshift DP camps, fashioned in former concentration camps, like Bergen Belsen, and abandoned Nazi spaces, like the Landsberg DP camp that occupied former *Wehrmacht* barracks.²⁶ Those who refused to be repatriated were declared refugees and protected by international law enforced by UNRRA (and later the International Refugee Organization). Nonetheless, survivors faced dire circumstances. They were stateless, without food, clothing, housing, or means of finding lost family members. In the first few months after VE day, Jews were grouped according to nationality, often housed with groups of their tormentors.

Not until September 1945, when Earl Harrison, the American representative to the Intergovernmental Committee on Refugees, published a scathing report of the treatment of Jews under U.S. Military command, did Jews become a distinct group within the DP Administration.²⁷ Harrison's report was damning. He declared, "As matters now stand, we appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them."²⁸ This criticism marked a turning point for Jewish DPs who, thereafter, were recognized as a distinct group within their own camps, and for Jewish organizations in America that acknowledged and responded to the need for Jewish intervention abroad. However, the DP crisis increased as immigration quotas

occupying armies, and UNRRA, see Leonard Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), in particular, 9-38.

²⁶ Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945-1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002) and Irving Heymont, *Among the Survivors of the Holocaust – 1945: The Landsberg DP Camp Letters of Major Irving Heymont, United States Army*, (Cincinnati, OH: The American Jewish Archives, 1982).

²⁷ For more about the Harrison Report and life in DP camps, see Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 39 – 71; Arie J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics: Britain, the United States & Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 89 – 97; and Ben Shephard, *The Long Road Home: The Aftermath of the Second World War* (London: Bodley Head, 2010).

²⁸ Earl G. Harrison, *The Plight of the Displaced Jews in Europe: A Report to President Truman* (New York: Reprinted by United Jewish Appeal for Refugees, Overseas Needs and Palestine on behalf of Joint Distribution Committee, United Palestine Appeal, National Refugee Service, 1945), 12.

around the world prevented Jews from leaving Europe. The British White Papers limited immigration to Palestine and restrictive U.S. quotas prevented Jewish immigration at the scale needed to accommodate DPs.²⁹ Jews sought immigration routes to both the U.S. and Palestine despite these limitations, waiting years for quota numbers and following illegal routes to Palestine through Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and Italy.³⁰ Yet, the need for sites of immigration added pressure to the DP crisis and, despite President Truman's refugee directive, the issue was not alleviated until the creation of the State of Israel.³¹

The postwar period demanded both immediate material relief for survivors and long-term immigration possibilities. The organizations examined in this study responded to these complementary, although often contentious, humanitarian interests. Zionist organizations like Hadassah and the United Palestine Appeal depicted survivors and the tragedy of their wartime and postwar lives as a means for justifying a new state, focusing on the displacement of Jews as a primary danger for Jewish lives and defined Jewish safety through a Jewish state. Other organizations, such as the Joint Distribution Committee, National Council for Jewish Women, and the World Jewish Congress, supported Jewish life around the world and directed the

²⁹ For more about the White Papers and postwar immigration politics, particularly about Israel, see (among many others) Zvi Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979); Michael T. Benson, *Harry S. Truman and the Founding of Israel* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 1997); and Michael J. Cohen, *Truman and Israel* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

³⁰ The illegal immigration route, known as *Brichah*, is detailed in Yehuda Bauer, *Flight and Rescue: Brichah* (New York: Random House, 1970). See also, Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*.

³¹ Despite Truman's December 1945 directive to utilize existing quota numbers for DPs (paying particular attention to orphaned children), the U.S. was slow to open their doors for increased immigration. Only after the declaration of Israel did congress pass the 1948 DP Act, which needed further alterations to truly address the immigration interests of Jewish survivors. These additional reforms were made in the 1950 DP Act. See Dinnerstein, *America and the Survivors of the Holocaust*, 174 – 287; Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics*, 98-153; and Shephard, *The Long Road Home*, 368 – 383.

attention of their members at immediate material aid.³² Organizations concerned with American immigration, notably the United Service for New Americans, the Hebrew Immigrants Aid Society (HIAS), and the non-sectarian Citizen's Committee on Displaced Persons, argued that the experiences of survivors demanded increased quotas for American immigration. By exploring these and several other kinds of organizations, including the Jewish Labor Committee, ORT, and Vaad Hatzala, I point to opposing organizational goals that resulted in the construction of distinct survivor images and identities. I also argue that tensions within organizations resulted in a multiplicity of survivor representations for American audiences.³³ These organizations, in addition to the umbrella fundraising institution, the United Jewish Appeal, are the primary points of interrogation for this study and represent a diverse set of organizations that engaged Jews across the country.

³² Yehuda Bauer has written three sequential histories of JDC that serve as important background to this study. His work documents the efforts of American Jews to organize in response to World War I, throughout World War II, and after the war in response to the Holocaust. While much of the philanthropy accounted for in my dissertation was based on earlier models of humanitarian aid, there is little scholarly research that sets up this continuity. Bauer's *My Brother Keeper* serves as one example. Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother's Keeper: A History of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929-1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974), *American Jewry and the Holocaust: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1939-1945* (Jerusalem: The Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University, 1981) and *Out of the Ashes: The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989). Much more has been written about the work of American Jewish women in Jewish communal organizations, including the National Council for Jewish women and Hadassah. See in particular, Mary McCune, *The Whole Wide World, Without Limits: International Relief, Gender Politics, and American Jewish Women, 1893-1930* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005); the collected essays in Shulamit Reinharz, Shulamit, and Mark A. Raider, *American Jewish Women and the Zionist Enterprise* (Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2005); Kathleen A. Laughlin, "'Our Defense against Despair': The Progressive Politics of the National Council of Jewish Women after World War II," in *A Jewish Feminine Mystique?: Jewish Women in Postwar America*, ed. Hasia R. Diner, Shira M. Kohn, and Rachel Kranson, (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2010) 48 – 64; and Rebecca Boim Wolf, "'It's Good Americanism to Join Hadassah': Selling Hadassah in the Postwar Era," in *A Jewish Feminine Mystique?: Jewish Women in Postwar America*, ed. Hasia R. Diner, Shira M. Kohn, and Rachel Kranson (New Brunswick, N.J: Rutgers University Press, 2010) 65 - 86.

³³ Organizational histories also serve as background for this study, including Marc Lee Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal 1939 – 1982* (Scholars Press, 1982) and Sarah Kavanaugh, *Ort, the Second World War and the Rehabilitation of Holocaust Survivors* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

This is, by no means, an exhaustive study of how American Jews forged a response to the Holocaust in the postwar period, as it does not offer a history of aid efforts or track how philanthropic projects did or did not work in postwar Europe. Nor does this study consider organizations that, often in response to the Holocaust, focused their energies entirely on Israel or American Jewish life. Rather than survey the landscape of Jewish groups, I chose to consider those that did engage in discourse about the Holocaust and consider how they did so. This study, therefore, does not congratulate or condemn American Jewry at large for their efforts in the postwar period, but recognizes that most American Jews (Zionist/non-Zionist, socialist/liberal/conservative, Reform/Orthodox) encountered these narratives through philanthropic activity and examines the narrative strategies they used to do so.

By examining organizations that directed American Jewish attention towards Holocaust survivors, I limit the scope of the project, but still present a wide-angle view of the American Jewish communal landscape that accounts for a range of political ambitions and publicity strategies. Zionism plays an important role in this study as the creation of the State of Israel dramatically altered the tone, reach, and intentionality of American Jewish philanthropy as well as the possibilities for and representations of Holocaust survivors. For each project detailed here, 1948 was a significant turning point: organizations redirected material aid from Europe to Israel; UJA shifted the majority of funds to Zionist organizations; and the pressure for immigration reform in America eased as the doors to Israel opened. Nonetheless, survivors remained central figures in Jewish communal fundraising.

The power of the Holocaust to motivate American Jewish action and the employment of survivor narratives to mobilize fundraising was essential in the postwar period. By the 1990s, however, the relationship between Jewish fundraising and the Holocaust had become clichéd and

another point of criticism for Novick, Finkelstein, and others. An anecdote from Hilene Flanzbaum's *The Americanization of the Holocaust* illuminates the legacy of this relationship. Flanzbaum writes: "It became a crass joke in the American Jewish community in the 1960s that when a synagogue or a congregation needed money, all the rabbi had to do to get a bundle was to mention the Holocaust."³⁴ This joke, as Flanzbaum writes, "was meant to criticize the 'Holocaust cult'" in that it again points to the usability of the Holocaust and the "impoverished spirituality" of American Jews. And, yet, the joke also reveals the success of the very projects I explore here. In response to the Holocaust, American Jews transformed survivor narratives into appeals as a meaningful way to support their brethren abroad and sustain life at home. As the priorities of Jewish philanthropy shifted after the postwar period, the Holocaust stories used to fundraise in America no longer reflected the urgent demands of survivors and the meaning of these stories changed.

That Flanzbaum relies on this joke to introduce a series of essays about how the Holocaust was rendered into American terms underscores the need to look closely at the history of the Holocaust and fundraising and consider the needs of survivors alongside institutional efforts to fundraise based on Holocaust narratives. The debate about Americanization, defined by Michael Berenbaum as the reshaping of the Holocaust "to participate in the fundamental tale of pluralism, tolerance, democracy, and human rights that America tells about itself," also took shape during the mid-1990s, prompted by the opening of the USHMM and the success of *Schindler's List* in 1993.³⁵ These two very public forms of Holocaust memory provoked intense

³⁴ Hilene Flanzbaum, Introduction to *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 1-17, 13.

³⁵ Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 40-41.

criticism for telling stories about the Holocaust in American terms and universalizing messages about the Holocaust.

Alvin Rosenfeld has been, and continues to be, one of the most vocal critics of this narrative transformation.³⁶ He is wary of the universalization of the Holocaust that reduces the complex history and tragic loss of life to lessons about tolerance and a warning for the future. Rosenfeld views Americanization as a distortion of the Holocaust that “promote[s] a tendency to individualize, heroize, moralize, idealize, and universalize,” each of which diminishes the dark reality of the Holocaust.³⁷ At the same time, Berenbaum asserts that “the Americanization of the Holocaust is an honorable task” that makes the history of the Holocaust understandable for American audiences beyond American Jewry. The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, he argues, could transform the Holocaust into a story that illuminated American complicity in the war and inform visitors about contemporary issues by telling “the story of the Holocaust in such a way that it would resonate not only with the survivor in New York and his children in San Francisco, but with a black leader from Atlanta, a Midwestern farmer, or a Northeastern industrialist.”³⁸ For Berenbaum, then, Americanization adds meaning to the story of the Holocaust by defining it for larger audiences through contemporary social needs.

The tension between Rosenfeld and Berenbaum opens up the stakes of the larger debate, which was not only about suitable forms for telling stories about the Holocaust, but about the meaning of the Holocaust and what “knowing” the Holocaust should be. The collected essays in

³⁶ Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).

³⁷ Alvin Rosenfeld, “The Americanization of the Holocaust,” in *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 119 – 150, 123.

³⁸ Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph*, 20.

Hilene Flanzbaum's *The Americanization of the Holocaust* further parse the ways in which American culture has expanded, reduced, multiplied, and fundamentally transformed the meaning of the Holocaust as an event of consequence for American audiences. Nonetheless, she contends that, by 1999, "the Holocaust has become an artifact of American culture."³⁹ Of course, for the Jewish leaders of this study, this was not the case. In the immediate postwar period, the Holocaust had not yet been defined as a cohesive event and was not yet part of American consciousness in the way that inspired so much critical assessment in the 1990s.

Nonetheless, in the postwar period, American Jewish communal organizations engaged in the kind of narrative transformation described by Berenbaum and, as such, early Holocaust narratives participated in telling stories about America. Towards this end, America became a central character in the Holocaust stories publicized by Jewish communal organizations, serving as a symbol for hope, a site of possibility, and the source of liberation. The postwar American values of unity and freedom transformed survivors from victims of Nazism to enemies of totalitarianism and the rhetoric of Cold War America shaped the American Jewish engagement with the Holocaust not through marginalization, as asserted by Novick and Finkelstein, but by depicting survivors as ideal Americans, describing survivors as Pilgrims seeking religious freedom and new immigrants who could offer industrial labor to the American labor force.

In light of the debate about Americanization, my research suggests that the multiplicity of survivor representations in the postwar period was not only a response to the competing interests of Jewish organizations or postwar American optimism. The diversity of survivor images and narratives reflects a tension between recognizing the Holocaust as a universal story about

³⁹ Hilene Flanzbaum, Introduction to *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, 8.

freedom and a specific one about Jewish persecution. The terms used to represent survivors thus indicate that, in the immediate aftermath of the war, American Jews grappled with these conflicting narrative possibilities, asserting a universal story about displacement and migration through terms such as DP, Refugee, and New American, and a sense of Jewish particularity as defined by terms like “liberated Jews,” “the remnant,” and “remaining Jews.”⁴⁰ More general terms like “survivors of Nazi terror” or “victims of Hitler’s cruelties” expose early conceptions of Nazi crimes that acted as catchalls for both the Jews of Europe who suffered in the postwar regardless of their wartime condition and for non-Jews who were also displaced by the war. While they do not confront the darkest truths of Nazism, in the way that Rosenfeld would have hoped, these terms recognize multiple experiences during the war while also accounting for a changing postwar world.

The same fluidity of terminology was true for describing the Nazi Final Solution. The term “holocaust” (with a lower case h) was used as early as 1945, if not earlier, alongside a range of other terms to connote the Jewish experience under Nazism. “*Shoah*” and “*Khurbn*,” terms still recognized in Hebrew and Yiddish, respectively, were used in the 1940s and 50s, as were a seemingly unlimited list of descriptive phrases that conveyed an understanding of the unique experience of Jews under Nazism, including the “terrible plight of European Jewry” or “Nazi regime of systematic murder,” and more general terms, such as “the catastrophe” “the disaster,”

⁴⁰ “Remnant” or “remaining Jews” reference the *She’erit Hapletah*, the term survivors themselves used in the DP camps. Hagit Lavsky uses the term to mean the Jewish survivors who were forced to stay at DP camps and refused to be repatriated to their home countries. Meanwhile, Zeev Mankowitz believes the term best applies to the DPs in Germany, Italy and Austria who created a self-conscious community. He considers this identity to be uniquely part of the experience of displaced persons in the American Zone. Zeev Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). For more information about the term “*She’erit Hapletah*” and the DP experience in postwar Europe, see Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Lavsky, *New Beginnings*.

“Nazi atrocities,” or “Hitlerite terror.”⁴¹ Each of these phrases referenced what American Jews understood at the time to be the acts of violence, deportation, concentration, and extermination that Jews endured during the war and, throughout this dissertation, I try to quote these phrases whenever possible to enrich our understanding of how American Jews articulated the experiences of Jews under Nazism. Nonetheless, I also employ the term Holocaust in its contemporary understanding for ease of use and to point to instances when postwar narratives defied this contemporary understanding. This is particularly relevant in thinking about the primacy of the DP period in postwar discourse; focusing on the postwar period blurred the line of liberation and extended the timeline of Jewish persecution beyond the end of the war.⁴²

Yet, I avoid using the term “testimony” to refer to the narratives under investigation in this study. With the exception of David Boder’s project, I do not consider these stories to be testimonies, in that they were not constructed to be so. The work of Lawrence Langer, Dori Laub, Shoshana Felman, Henry Greenspan, Zoë Waxman, and Gary Weissman, in particular, have each contributed to my understanding of testimony as a reflective act invested with historical meaning that transforms survivors into witnesses.⁴³ As Felman explains, this act connects a witness with the listener: to testify is “more than simply to report a fact or an event or to relate what has been lived, recorded, and remembered. Memory is conjured here essentially in

⁴¹ Much has been written about the term “Holocaust” and its dominance since the 1970s, following the *Holocaust* miniseries, aired on NBC in 1978. For a focused discussion of Holocaust terminology see Gerd Korman, “The Holocaust in American Historical Writing,” *Societas* 2.3 (Summer 1972): 251-70.

⁴² Additionally, I appreciate Gary Weissman’s assertion that using the term ‘Holocaust’ “suggests not only the Jewish genocide but its Americanization, not only the event but the attempt to name or represent it.” Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*, 26.

⁴³ Langer, *Holocaust testimonies*, Felman and Laub, *Testimony*, Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors*, Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust*, Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*.

order to address another, to impress upon a listener, to appeal to a community.”⁴⁴ The majority of public narratives examined in this study were not performed as acts of witnessing, although chapter one considers this idea in more detail. For the most part, the narratives crafted for postwar philanthropy were disconnected from the survivor and constructed for the purposes, interests, and demands of American audiences. As such, I refer to stories and narratives, leaving the term “testimony” to stand for survivor accounts intentionally and consciously constructed between a listener and an interviewee.

The dissertation is organized around the variety of philanthropic activities directed to aid DPs and media forms through which American Jews first learned about the Holocaust and its survivors. As such, each chapter explores a philanthropic project, arguing that different efforts engaged audiences in unique ways and translated the needs of survivors through a variety of media. This organization highlights a multiplicity of narrative forms, including oral, printed, audio, and visual, which transmitted knowledge about the Holocaust to American audiences and translated survivor accounts into American stories through individual speeches and acts of witnessing performed by aid workers back in America; fundraising campaign pamphlets, posters, and films; clothing and food drives; letter writing campaigns; and radio advocacy. These projects not only account for a diverse set of American Jewish organizations, but consider the role of media and technology in collecting, transporting, and transforming early survivor narratives.

This thematic approach charts the multiplicity of images and voices that transmitted the stories of survivors in America. Chapters one and two detail how American interlocutors and Jewish leaders constructed stories about survivors and the postwar chaos of Europe according to

⁴⁴ Shoshana Felman, “The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*,” in *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York: Routledge, 1991), 204.

their own experiences and interests; chapter three considers how symbols of the Holocaust were understood by American Jews from within a postwar American context, which dislocated them from the realities of postwar Europe; and chapters four and five grapple with the limited opportunities survivors had to express their own experiences for American audiences. This structure marks a transition in narrative expression from American witnesses to survivors, tracing the primacy of witnessing the postwar to the Holocaust as the central event. Yet, each chapter affirms that American Jewish communal institutions mediated and manufactured these narratives to best motivate American Jewish action and portray American Jews as leaders of the postwar Jewish world.

The first chapter starts with a concept familiar to Holocaust studies: witnessing. Yet, rather than explore the role of survivors as witnesses, I examine the American interlocutors who served as witnesses to the survivors. Rabbi Herbert Friedman, Cecilia Razovsky, and Leo Srole, serve as case studies for considering how individual Americans became witnesses to the postwar period and translated stories about survivor suffering into American idioms. These secondary witnesses better communicated the demands and needs of survivors in the aftermath of the war to American audiences and did so through the fundraising networks of Jewish communal organizations. Through these mediators, the immediacy of “being there” and “having seen” conveyed not the tragedy and loss of the Holocaust, but the urgency and precariousness of the postwar period and converted postwar stories into fundraising appeals, political justifications for the state of Israel and American immigration reform, and universal parables about freedom and democracy.

These secondary witnesses transformed European stories into tales about American values. The translation not just of language, but of expression and sentiment, enabled American

Jews to connect with survivors in a way that survivor narratives were unable to do at the time and David Boder's 1946 oral history project serves as a comparative example. Boder's effort to translate and publish the verbatim narratives of Holocaust survivors reveals that primary witnessing (of the event of the Holocaust) had not yet found the potency it would later command. In fact, Boder's narratives struggled to find an American audience in the 1940s and 1950s while American Jewish organizations supported and promoted secondary witnesses who mobilized American Jews in response to postwar needs.

The efforts of secondary witnesses supported the large-scale fundraising campaigns of American Jewish organizations that sought to alleviate the short- and long-term needs of Jewish survivors. Organizations across the political and religious spectrum announced unprecedented fundraising goals and employed the images and narratives of survivors to inspire giving. Chapter two explores the narratives crafted through these fundraising efforts, focusing primarily on the postwar campaigns of the United Jewish Appeal (UJA), which sought to reach American Jews of all religious, political, and cultural affiliations, and Hadassah, the largest Zionist organization in America. Through UJA, American Jews took on the responsibility of funding not only rehabilitation for Jews in Europe, but building in Palestine, Jewish military action in Israel, and emigration to the United States. The diversity of these goals, which reflected the constituent organizations of UJA – the Joint Distribution Committee, the United Palestine Appeal, and the National Refugee Service/United Service for New Americans – resulted in the multiplicity of survivor representations.

Despite these varied representations, American Jews remained the answer to all postwar Jewish problems and central to all philanthropic narratives. By depicting American Jews as the necessary saviors of Jewish lives, a Jewish future, and Judaism itself, the fundraising campaigns

of UJA, Hadassah, and other organizations constructed intersecting stories about American Jews and survivors. As a result, the narratives that informed American Jews about the plight of survivors abroad, whether in Europe or Israel, also positioned American Jews as leaders of the postwar Jewish world, a role they continued to accept throughout the postwar period by giving ever-greater amounts of money to Jewish causes.

Chapter three further examines the reciprocal narratives of survivors and American Jews as depicted by the nationwide clothing drive campaign, Supplies for Overseas Survivors (SOS). The JDC-sponsored effort collected over 20 million pounds of clothing, canned foods, and medical items and depicted American Jews as the “lifeline” for surviving Jews. SOS collections echoed national postwar philanthropic efforts to send material goods abroad as a sign of friendship and a weapon in the postwar battle for peace. Seen alongside the United National Clothing Collection, SOS gave Jews a way to be part of early Cold War intervention that complicated the symbolic meaning of Holocaust objects like clothes, shoes, and trains. This chapter considers the impact of postwar American values like consumerism and consensus in addition to early Cold War rhetoric, which turned representations of Holocaust survivors into narratives about American ideals of freedom and peace. As such, it relates to recent scholarship that sees the seeming signs of American altruism in this period as part of a Cold War strategy.

On a smaller scale, pen-pal programs also sent American friendship abroad by pairing American Jewish donors with individual survivors in Europe. These programs, sponsored by a range of Jewish organizations, sent aid to young survivors, focusing on the needs that children had for moral and emotional aid in addition to material support. Chapter four focuses on the organized projects of the World Jewish Congress and Vaad Hatzala that projected American Jewish anxieties about the Jewish future onto stories about the Holocaust. The letters that

traversed the ocean to build personal relationships between American and European Jews empowered survivors to articulate their own stories in a way denied to them by other philanthropic projects. Yet, the possibility for self-expression through letter writing was still mediated by Jewish organizations and public narratives based on personal letters were adapted into generic stories of deportation, displacement, and redemption.

The final chapter of the dissertation further examines how survivor narratives were transformed from stories of tragedy into stories of hope through dramatized radio broadcasts. Organizations, both Jewish and secular, that sponsored programs about the Holocaust relied on radio norms and practices to shape survivor representations in America and integrated deeply American motifs, like pilgrims and the founding fathers, to appeal broadly to listeners. These broadcasts depicted the process of “giving testimony” but complicated notions about the authenticity of a survivor voice and thus raised interesting questions about how the radio defined American conceptions of a survivor. Two programs in particular, *Displaced*, about Kurt Maier and sponsored by the Citizen’s Committee on Displaced Persons, and *Case History #20,000*, about a young survivor named “Hannah” that was sponsored by Hadassah, detail the conventions of sound technologies that evoked the world of the Holocaust through flashback and sound effects. By examining radio as an important publicity media for American Jewish communal organizations, I conclude the study with questions about the role technology plays in crafting survivor narratives.

Throughout these chapters, the postwar context remains an essential backdrop. Each of the individuals featured in this work responded to the Holocaust in its immediate aftermath and worked within established networks and systems to respond to unprecedented loss and tragedy. Philanthropy was an understandable site for these responses: Jews were in dire need around the

world and American Jews were empowered, encouraged, and determined to help. The title of the dissertation recalls the immediacy and uncertainty of the postwar period, as Gisela Wyzanski and Lola Kramarsky wrote to all members of the Advisory Council of the Hadassah National Youth Aliyah Committee on July 27, 1945, “In a world still trembling with the impact of evils let loose upon the world by our enemies and the enemies of mankind, let us resolve to snatch the children from the site and memory of their martyrdom, and to give them what they so desperately need – a home, love, and hope.”⁴⁵ As they make clear, philanthropy became a meaningful way for American Jews to respond to the shock of the Holocaust and, as a result, the efforts of American Jewish communal organizations to aid survivors abroad shaped an early American understanding of the Holocaust that articulated the role of American Jews as donors and saviors.

⁴⁵ Letter from Mrs. Charles E. Wyzanski, Jr. and Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, co-Chairmen of the National Youth Aliyah Committee, to Youth Aliyah co-workers, July 27, 1945, Box 17, Folder 118, Youth Aliyah Papers, Hadassah Archive.

1.

A Culture of Secondary Witnessing: American Encounters with Holocaust Survivors

In June 1946, Rabbi Herbert Friedman, a U.S. Army chaplain stationed in Berlin, Germany, received a letter from Charles Rosenbaum, President of the Allied Jewish Council of Denver, asking him to speak at a dinner launching the region's 1946 annual fundraising campaign. The Denver council had been assigned a quota of \$600,000 (increased from the 1945 quota of \$200,000) and Rosenbaum knew that if Friedman could "tell the story, in your own words, based upon what you have seen and what you have experienced" that the Denver community would "respond by giving in an unprecedented measure."¹ This request points to the value of having "seen" and "experienced" in the immediate postwar period and to the legitimacy of witnessing that was attributed not only to survivors but to chaplains, soldiers, and aid workers. Rosenbaum reiterated this point, writing to Friedman, "The story coming from your lips would bring home to every individual who hears you the necessity for immediate and substantial aid."² In the shadow of the war, as American Jews mobilized a response to the aftermath of the Holocaust, the stories of Americans working in Europe were thus transformed into fundraising appeals that translated the needs of Jewish survivors for American Jewish donors.

Friedman could not be present at the Denver dinner and sent a speech in his absence that described the survivors as "the remnant left over from the concentration camps, the ones that

¹ Letter from Charles Rosenbaum to Rabbi Herbert Friedman, June 20, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, Herbert A. Friedman Papers (HAFP), American Jewish Archives (AJA).

² Ibid.

were liberated by the victorious Allied armies.” He wrote, “They came out of Dachau and Buchenwald as skeletons.”³ Newsreels and photographs from liberating soldiers had already portrayed survivors in this way, which Friedman acknowledged, telling his audience, “You know that whole story – you’ve seen the pictures.” In the remainder of his speech, Friedman told a different story – one that was not as widely known – about Polish Jews who had returned home after the war and continued to live in danger. Hoping to “bring home” the urgency of American aid, Friedman reported, “Jews were being murdered steadily at the rate of 2 to 3 each day. Killing was taking place all over the land,” and, he elaborated, “Men were forced, at the point of a gun, to take off their clothing, so that it could be seen whether they were Jewish or not...It was Hitler all over again.”⁴ His impassioned language exposes the personal anguish of Americans confronted with the desperation of survivors in Europe and is representative of how early postwar narratives were constructed for fundraising appeals.⁵ By describing the failure of liberation to free Jews from victimization, Friedman gave emotional potency to UJA campaigns and his appeal commanded the power of his roles as both Rabbi and witness: “As your Rabbi and one who has spent almost a whole year working here I say one word. Please.”⁶

Friedman was not the only such witness in postwar Europe. Chaplains, aid workers, and American Jewish communal leaders were posted across Europe and brought home their experiences to share with American audiences. These men and women worked with, met with,

³ Remarks to Denver Campaign Dinner, September 15, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ The strength of the language is conveyed even more boldly in a telegram sent from Friedman. He says, “Returned from Poland few weeks ago. Jews there in panic. Average of three killed daily...have seen with my own eyes tired sick hungry Jews shoving across border...American Jews must absolutely give as never before. Events here are beyond imagination.” Telegram from Chaplain Friedman to Charles Rosenbaum, September 11, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

⁶ Ibid.

and toured the spaces of Displaced Persons (DP) and concerned themselves with the plight of Jewish survivors who continued to live on the brink of death, in Poland, as described by Friedman, and in DP camps where disease and hunger persisted. Many of these individuals, including Friedman, returned to America and became active speakers, making public the needs of survivors through telling stories of their own experiences abroad. These Americans, including Cecilia Razovsky, Leo Lania, Leo Srole, Leo Schwarz, and David Boder, as well as countless others, toured the country speaking for UJA, JDC, Hadassah and other groups, became political advocates for DPs, wrote articles, and published collected editions of survivor narratives.

These men and women became important intermediaries between the survivors in Europe and American audiences and told their own stories not just for American Jewish fundraising, but for the justification of a Jewish state, and advocacy for American immigration reform. In so doing, they Americanized narratives about the Holocaust and its aftermath, rendering stories in universal terms and through American ideals. The Americanization of these stories exemplifies Alvin Rosenfeld's assessment that understanding the Holocaust in America meant that the complex history of Jewish persecution under Nazism would be "individualize[d], heroize[d], moralize[d], idealize[d], and universalize[d]."⁷ That Rosenfeld waged this critique against American cultural engagement with the Holocaust in the 1990s does not discount the warning for the 1940s, when philanthropic appeals played a significant role in informing American Jews about the Holocaust. Why were early survivor narratives told through American values and how did that define the way American Jews first learned about the Holocaust?

⁷ Alvin Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," in *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 123.

This chapter takes up this question by examining the role of American interlocutors, like Friedman, in telling stories about the survivors through their own postwar experiences. In this way, these individuals became secondary witnesses, telling stories not about the Holocaust or the experience of Jews under Nazism, but about the survivors and their postwar needs. Friedman's speech is only one example of the myriad ways in which American Jews who lived and worked in Europe brought home stories and transformed them by integrating American idioms into their narratives. As such, I examine the eyewitness stories of American experiences in postwar Europe that came to stand in for stories about the Holocaust and consider how Jewish organizations concerned with the plight of Europe's surviving Jews in the second half of the 1940s cultivated a witness culture that legitimized "being there" unrelated to survivor testimony.

I will first define my use of the term "secondary witness" as a way to differentiate between survivors who have become eyewitnesses to 'the Holocaust' as the central event and American aid workers who told stories to American audiences about the aftermath of Nazi destruction. I will then detail the evolution of Friedman's story through four letters and speeches to make clear how the postwar became the central event for secondary witnesses. Friedman's efforts as a fundraiser in America also reveal the process of narrative transformation that allowed American audiences to connect with the plight of Europe's Jews. Like Friedman, Cecilia Razovsky transformed her personal experience working with survivors in postwar Europe into fundraising appeals and I examine a 1947 speech she gave to illuminate early encounters between Americans and survivors that anticipate later anxieties about survivor witnessing and the assertion of "never again."

The chapter then considers the way Jewish communal organizations prioritized and valued secondary witnessing for fundraising as well as political campaigning. Jewish

organizations sent leaders to Europe to become witnesses to the DP crisis and voice the needs of survivors at home. Such publicity efforts defined the importance of “being there” and the need for community members to transmit stories for a variety of audiences. By considering the use of secondary witnessing beyond fundraising, this chapter also calls attention to the universalization of Holocaust narratives in the postwar period. These narratives promoted American values and called on American leaders to aid survivors based on human and democratic rights. Finally, I turn to consider two American intermediaries who collected and transported survivor narratives from Europe to America. Leo Schwarz published a collection of edited survivor accounts that celebrated American ideals and depicted survivors as symbols of Jewish survival.⁸ David Boder, on the other hand, offers an important counter example by translating and publishing survivor narratives that preserved the loss of the Holocaust through detailed accounts of Jewish experiences under Nazism.

Decades later, survivors became iconic witnesses to the Holocaust, but in the immediate aftermath of the war, when the dangers of the war persisted and survivors across Europe faced hunger, disease, cold, homelessness, and statelessness, American Jews served as witnesses to the survivors. American Jewish communal groups defined the way stories about the Holocaust were told and directed American Jewish attention not at witness accounts that preserved the historic importance of Jewish experiences under Nazism, but at the most pressing needs of the postwar world. Through the lens of philanthropic response, the Jewish catastrophe was thus defined by both the Nazi persecution during the war and the ongoing DP crisis after liberation. As such,

⁸ This idea echoes Hasia Diner’s assertion that survivors became “symbols of Jewish endurance” in Schwarz’ work and other postwar publications. Hasia R. Diner, *We remember with reverence and love: American Jews and the myth of silence after the Holocaust, 1945-1962* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 187.

secondary witnesses who had worked with survivors, and not the survivors themselves, became essential eyewitnesses.

Eyewitness to the aftermath of the Holocaust

In using the term “secondary witnessing” to differentiate American witnesses of the postwar from survivors who developed their own postwar witness culture, I’m appropriating an already problematic term that has been used primarily in relation to the development and assessment of survivor testimony from the last thirty years.⁹ Nonetheless, it is a valuable concept for thinking through the role of Americans who transformed and transmitted the stories of postwar Europe for American audiences. As Dominick LaCapra articulates, it is especially important in defining the relationship of an individual to the survivor. He defines a “secondary witness” as one who “undergoes a transferential relation, and must work out an acceptable subject-position with respect to the witness and his or her testimony.”¹⁰ In this way, LaCapra identifies the tendency of “interviewer, historian, or analyst” to become “emotionally implicated” in the story of a survivor and demands an awareness of the encounter between a survivor story and an outside witness.

Dori Laub similarly analyzed the relationship between the survivor and their “listener,”

⁹ Survivors had constituted Historical Commissions across Europe to document Nazi crimes and record survivor accounts. For a detailed history of the commissions in France, Poland, Germany, Austria, and Italy, see Laura Jockusch, *Collect and Record!: Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2012).

¹⁰ Dominick LaCapra, *History and Memory after Auschwitz* (Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), 11.

emphasizing that this secondary person is a necessary partner in bearing witness.¹¹ Laub's definition of the listener as "party to the creation of knowledge" is another way of understanding the role of "secondary witnesses" as one who participates in the creation of memory and meaning through the act of listening.¹² For Laub, then, the act of witnessing the "Holocaust experience" is entirely in relation to the narration of the event, either you are narrating your own experience or witnessing the narration of someone else. Like Laub, Henry Greenspan adopts the term "listeners" to recognize a distinct group of non-witnesses who nonetheless have an important relationship to the construction of narrative. As Greenspan explains, "The roles of recounter and listener in the interview dialogue are not the same. A good interview is a process in which two people work hard to understand the view and experience of one person: the interviewee." As such, the listener takes on the responsibility of understanding what the survivor wants to share even if, "as listeners...we hear what we want to hear."¹³ Both Greenspan and Laub attribute to the listener a role in creating, as well as discerning, meaning in survivor testimony, locating the concept of witnessing only within the construction of narrative.

Shoshana Felman, on the other hand, defines "second-degree witnesses" as "witnesses of

¹¹ Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), 57 – 74.

¹² Laub, "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening," 57. Laub refines the role of the listener by classifying three "distinct levels of witnessing in relation to the Holocaust experience: the level of being a witness to oneself within the experience; the level of being a witness to the testimony of others; and the level of being a witness to the process of witnessing itself." Dori Laub, "An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony, and Survival," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), 75 – 92, 75.

¹³ Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998), xvii.

witnesses” or “witnesses of the testimony.”¹⁴ For Felman, one can become a second-degree witness without participating in the creation of testimony or memory. Marianne Hirsch has also applied the term “secondary witness” to those who view and interact with a documentary record about the Holocaust. Like LaCapra’s assertion that historians can act as secondary witnesses, Hirsch employs the term to name those who approach the archival legacy of the period. Hirsch’s theory of Post-Memory explains the way children of survivors who have a secondary — or “second-generation” — relationship to the memory of the Holocaust develop transferred trauma.¹⁵

These scholars, writing from the diverse fields of history, literary criticism, and psychology, introduce alternate ways of understanding the concept, but all address the importance of differentiating between survivors, who bear witness to “the Holocaust experience,” and to those who, in a variety of ways, bear witness to the survivors and their attempts to make meaning from their own experiences. These differing approaches expose the process of memory construction that creates (and obscures) meaning in narratives about the Holocaust by calling attention to the indirect relationship of “secondary witnesses” and “listeners” to the events of the Holocaust. The concept thus adds needed intervention to Ellen Fine’s assertion that “to listen to a witness is to become one.”¹⁶

¹⁴ Shoshana Felman, “The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*,” in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub (New York; London: Routledge, 1992), 204 – 283, 213.

¹⁵ Marianne Hirsch, “Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile,” *Poetics Today* 17:4 (Winter 1996), 659-686.

¹⁶ Ellen S. Fine, *Legacy of Night, the Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), 9.

Nonetheless, Gary Weissman argues that the term does not properly recognize the mediating factors that transfer memory from survivors to viewers, listeners, or family members. He contends that terms like “secondary witness” and “vicarious witness” “contribute to a wishful blurring of otherwise obvious and meaningful distinctions between the victims and ourselves, and between the Holocaust and our own historical moment.”¹⁷ Instead, he adopts the term “nonwitness” to stress that “‘we’ did not witness the Holocaust, and that the experience of listening to, reading, or viewing witness testimony is substantially unlike the experience of victimization.”¹⁸ Weissman’s intervention invites a closer look at victimization as a central component of bearing witness and offers an important, if sharp, critique of contemporary interest in accessing the experience of the Holocaust.

These categorizations offer a way back to the chaplains, soldiers, academics, volunteers, and aid workers who became speakers in the postwar period. While they offered important eyewitness accounts of the postwar period, they remained outside the experience of victimization. The stories they told to American audiences were their own, but still distanced from the subject they intended to convey. As Weissman suggests, this is an important distinction and one that complicates the role of these American intermediaries. The remainder of the chapter will try to make sense of the multiple positions these individuals held in relation to both the survivors and their audiences. In so doing, I employ the term “secondary witness” to reflect the work of these individuals as witnesses to the distress of the postwar, but not to the central event

¹⁷ Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 20.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

of the Holocaust and their transmission of survivor narratives that were not their own. As a result, they were “secondary” in the way Felman defines, as “witness to the witness.”¹⁹

The postwar adventure of Chaplain Herbert Friedman

In many ways, Friedman serves as the exemplar of how I mean to define a secondary witness in the postwar period and his experience in Poland, as briefly described in his speech above, became a significant touchstone that he returned to again and again in interpreting the needs of survivors for American donors. Tracing this story in four letters and speeches offers a concrete example of how secondary witnesses crafted eyewitness accounts that translated the urgent needs of survivors into philanthropic appeals through American idioms. Friedman’s repeated use of this story in his fundraising speeches also offers an example of how the postwar became a central component for talking about the Holocaust. The continued uncertainty and fear that survivors faced after the end of the war challenges the idea that liberation was a definitive marker of Jewish persecution and freedom. As a witness to the postwar chaos, Friedman’s speeches offer a first person account of this moment, but a secondary account of the Holocaust as a unique event.

Rabbi Herbert Friedman left Congregation Emanuel in Denver, Colorado to serve with the 9th Infantry Division in the fall of 1945 and was transferred to Berlin on March 20, 1946 to coordinate the DP centers in the US Zone.²⁰ For five months, Friedman served in this position,

¹⁹ Felman, “The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann’s *Shoah*,” 213.

²⁰ For more about Jewish chaplains and their work with Jewish DPs see Alex Grobman, *Rekindling the Flame: American Jewish Chaplains and the Survivors of European Jewry, 1944-1948* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1993).

working with the leaders of the DP communities and negotiating between the U.S. Military and the survivors in Germany.²¹ In the last week of July 1946 Friedman travelled with Rabbi Phillip Bernstein, the Advisor of Jewish Affairs to General McNarney, to Poland to assess the on-the-ground situation for Jews after the Kielce Pogrom on July 4, 1946 and the trip served to be revelatory for Friedman, as he told stories about what he saw there for years after the war, as a pulpit Rabbi, on tour for UJA, and as an executive at UJA after 1955.²² After this trip, Friedman was transferred to Bernstein's office for Jewish Affairs and, on this special assignment, travelled throughout Europe, meeting with survivors in Germany, Sweden, Denmark, Austria, Italy and Poland.²³ As Bernstein's aide, Friedman became a powerful player in Jewish postwar affairs, conferring with Jewish leaders from the JDC, the Jewish Agency, and the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, and working with the U.S. Military. As a result, he had first-hand knowledge of all aspects of postwar Jewish activity, both the daily lives of survivors and the efforts of Jews in America, a unique perspective that made him an ideal witness to the survivors. He excelled at navigating both worlds and communicating between Jewish leaders and DPs.²⁴ Friedman's

²¹ Transfer Order, March 16, 1946, Box 1, Folder 3, HAFP/AJA. This position placed Friedman directly between these two forces on occasion. He recalled a moment in Frankfurt when the DP community had gathered to commemorate the Warsaw ghetto uprising and the event turned into a protest against the British embassy because of British policies in Palestine. The situation quickly turned tense as Jews marched through the city and Germans grew fearful that violence might turn against them. Friedman describes his action on behalf of the DPs convincing the ranking U.S. Colonel to let the Jews march peacefully, so that in the end "the United States Army [led] the march on the British Consulate." Transcript of Friedman's Speech, June 8, 1947, 93 – 96, Box 23, Folder 1, HAFP/AJA.

²² Friedman served UJA as Executive Director and then Executive Vice-Chairman from 1955-1982, when he left to help launch the Wexner Heritage Foundation with Les Wexner.

²³ Series of orders document Friedman's travels around Europe in 1946, Box 1, Folder 3, HAFP/AJA.

²⁴ I.L. Kenen, Executive Secretary of American Jewish Conference, wrote a letter to Henry Winter of Friedman's Temple Emanuel detailing his visit to Europe and extolling the value of Rabbi Friedman as their tour guide to the DP camps. Kenen wrote of Friedman's reputation among the U.S. Army as well as "his love for his work, his affection for the people whose lives he is helping to rebuild." He also described a visit they went on to Ziegenheim DP camp; Kenen felt unable to talk to the "unfortunate" DPs, but found that the survivors were not interested in the American civilians. Instead, he wrote, "They were swarming about Rabbi Friedman; he became the center of a huge crowd which followed him as he walked...he had an answer and a sympathetic word for them all." The letter was read aloud to "some 1100 present" congregation members at Rosh Hashanah services and excerpted in several local

access around Europe gave him legitimacy as a witness and his own moral commitment to the DPs made him a passionate advocate on their behalf.²⁵

Friedman's sense of moral obligation continued when he returned to America in June 1947 and began speaking on behalf of the UJA. His experiences in Europe resonated with American audiences and Friedman's insistence that American Jews could alleviate the suffering of Jews in Europe produced powerful results for UJA. Henry Morgenthau, Jr., UJA Chairman from 1947 – 1950, called one of Friedman's talks in New York, "The most stirring appeal that has been made here in years" and recruited Friedman to tour the country with him on behalf of UJA.²⁶ His ability to give voice to his own experience, the postwar suffering of DPs, and the urgency for American Jews to give as the only solution successfully interpreted the demands of Europe at home. It is this intersection, of the personal experience, the needs of survivors, and the insistence on fundraising, which defined the Americanization of the Holocaust narratives in the postwar period.²⁷ To make stories about Jewish survivors relevant to American audiences, Friedman translated his experiences in Europe into an American vernacular.

newspapers. Letter from I.L. Kenen to Henry Winter, September 16, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA. "Friedman praised for work," *Intermountain Jewish News*, and "Rabbi Friedman is Lauded for German Morale Work," *Rocky Mountain News*, September 29, 1946, Clippings, Box 1, Folder 5, HAFP/AJA.

²⁵ A letter from Friedman dated July 5, 1946 rejected attempts by his congregation at home to appeal for his early discharge from the Army. Friedman made clear that "morally and according to the dictates of my conscience" he could not seek an early discharge. He stated that "knowing the present DP situation as I do...it is simply not right for me" to leave. Letter from Friedman to Louis Isaacson, July 5, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

²⁶ Telegram from Henry Morgenthau, Jr. to Louis C. Isaacson, President of Congregation Emanuel, June 9, 1947 and letter from Louis C. Isaacson to Congregants, June 11, 1947, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

²⁷ By using the term, "Americanization," I refer to Michael Berenbaum's definition: the reshaping of the Holocaust "to participate in the fundamental tale of pluralism, tolerance, democracy, and human rights that America tells about itself." It will become clear that Friedman and the other American witnesses featured in this chapter translated European stories into tales of tolerance and democracy. Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 40-41. The Americanization of the Holocaust in the mid -1990s became a source of criticism and debate as "the Holocaust" became "an artifact of American culture," according to Hilene Flanzbaum. Critics of this process contend that the

The first narration of Friedman's trip was an August 30, 1946 letter addressed to his constituents in Denver. The letter, sent two weeks before his absent speech quoted above, was meant for publication in his synagogue bulletin where it could be read by the large congregation and then reprinted. Written two weeks after his trip, this letter was likely his first expression of the chaos he saw among Polish Jews. He wrote, "We found the Jewish community all over Poland in a state of near-hysteria...Jews are leaving Poland and running, running, running..."²⁸ Here, as earlier, Friedman's letter is not about the Holocaust per se, but about the postwar experience of Polish Jews who continued to face violent persecution. Although he described the "haggard" faces of Jewish refugees who been repatriated from Russia, he evaded more explicit descriptions and declared, "I can't begin to describe in detail all the things that we saw."²⁹ Friedman's hesitance in sharing more details was echoed in the September speech when he said that his audience had already seen images of survivors as skeletons. Yet, he did not remain silent; Friedman exposed the exhaustion, fear, and frenzy of the postwar for surviving Jews.

At the border of Czechoslovakia and Poland, for example, he described the "hundreds of infiltrates streaming across the border without baggage, without papers, in a mad flight to safety. It was heartbreaking and nerve-wracking to witness the indignity of this flight. Harassed and bounded, these people, the few survivors of the long terrible years under Hitler, again found themselves insecure, frightened, in danger of their lives – and once again assuming the role of

use of American values to construct stories about the Holocaust distorts its complex history. Hilene Flanzbaum, Introduction to *The Americanization of the Holocaust*, ed. Hilene Flanzbaum, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), 8 and Alvin Rosenfeld, "The Americanization of the Holocaust," in ed. Alvin Rosenfeld, *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

²⁸ Letter from Friedman to "Dear Friends," August 30, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

²⁹ Ibid.

the ever wandering Jew.”³⁰ In this letter, Friedman offered an eyewitness account of the postwar experience of the survivors, but from outside the experience of insecurity and fear. He expressed the failure of liberation to alleviate Jewish suffering and blurred the boundary between wartime and postwar. Yet, he remained apart from the emotional reality of Europe’s Jews; his perspective remained American. Friedman also provided his audience a more mythic understanding of the Jews of Europe by evoking the “ever wandering Jews.” Rather than a tragedy of the DP period, Friedman defined the experience of Europe’s surviving Jews as a continuous displacement.

In the speech Friedman sent to Denver in September 1946, he conveyed this scene again, but without evoking the idea of the “ever wandering Jew.” Instead, Friedman’s speech rooted the postwar struggles Jews faced in the immediate political context of illegal border crossings. He wrote:

They fought and clawed to get a place in the truck. A little baby started wailing in the pitch darkness. More and more people tried to crowd in – nobody wanted to be left behind. Baggage was thrown out to make room for people. A woman cried out. Off they went, absolutely empty-handed, into the uncertain unknown future – perhaps to jail if they were caught trying to make the illegal crossing; the best they had to hope for was some DP camp in Germany, if they could get that far. But they were going anyhow, because they couldn’t stay in Poland.³¹

Friedman’s language here was more descriptive and the memory was more immediate. He included visual and auditory signals that invited the audience to envision themselves in the scene.

Yet, both versions of this story were refracted through Friedman’s own experience. In the first, he was a witness to the indignity and in the second, he could only postulate their fear of

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Remarks to Campaign Dinner, Denver, September 15, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

going “into the uncertain unknown future.” He offered no quotes from the survivors or entry into their lived experience. That this story, ostensibly about Jews escaping postwar Poland, became transformed into a story about Friedman’s experience of witnessing is best expressed in the opening passage of his August letter, in which he wrote, “The Polish mission was one of the most exciting things that ever happened to me.”³² Friedman’s sense of adventure and enthusiasm thus framed his personal story and translated the tragedy and sadness of the Holocaust into American terms.

Additionally, his “excitement” illustrates the distance between the experience of the Jewish survivors and the American aid workers, a distance that translated an outsider’s enthusiasm as part of the story of the Holocaust. Although Friedman was there and saw, with his own eyes, the fear of Jewish survivors, he did not and could not experience the terror of Europe’s Jews. So that the witness accounts that informed Americans about Jewish persecution was always, in this sense, “secondary.” Friedman’s sense of adventure further defined how American Jews learned about the Holocaust through relevant cultural references. In his letter, he described Warsaw through a cinematic reference, writing that the city was “full of international correspondents, Russian officers, UNRRA workers...Jews, Americans, French and British” and “The Hotel Polonia in and of itself would make a wonderful plot of an international spy movie.”³³

Friedman was not alone in expressing the pace and urgency of postwar Europe as thrilling. Many aid workers travelled to Europe looking for adventure, an impulse seemingly at odds with the emotional and physical demands of the work. Yet, the desire for excitement did not

³² Letter from Friedman to “Dear Friends,” August 30, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

³³ Ibid.

diminish the commitment they felt for the cause of aiding the DPs.³⁴ Henry Levy, JDC Director in Bulgaria in 1947, similarly expressed a sense of adventure in living life abroad and the particular excitement of life in Berlin, the center of the demanding and frenetic work responding to Holocaust survivors. In August 1947, Levy wrote to Friedman from Sofia, Bulgaria and noted, “I miss the dramatic quality of the Berlin assignment for I know that the real and immediate problem is the early resettlement of our camp brethren.”³⁵ Levy thus articulated how a desire for adventure could be deeply intertwined with a commitment to humanitarian work.

Levy also noted the emotional toll of such a job and correspondence between Levy and Friedman reveals how time spent in DP camps, even if exciting and adventurous, altered the way they saw the world. Levy wished the Friedmans an easy adjustment back in Denver because, “I suspect that for some time to come your dreams will be disturbed by Jews in Camps and that Chaplain Herb Friedman will see himself wandering from Camp to Camp, talking to this committee or that committee, giving them hope and courage and feeling more enriched personally, by it.”³⁶ Clearly for Friedman and Levy, the events they witnessed resulted in lasting psychological impact. Friedman acknowledged a changed perspective when he responded: “Life in America is still somewhat strange to us. It really takes much longer than one thinks to adjust properly to the problems which are agitating people here, which seem rather petty in the face of the things we saw overseas.”³⁷ Friedman’s articulation of his shifting priorities offers deeper

³⁴ Yehuda Bauer notes that the Jews devoted to working in Europe, the Middle East and Shanghai “agreed to go abroad out of idealism, or adventure-seeking, or both.” Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the Ashes: The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989), xx.

³⁵ Letter from Henry Levy to Herbert Friedman, August 17, 1947, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Letter from Friedman to Levy, October 21, 1947, Box 23, Folder 7, HAFP/AJA.

reflection on his sense of excitement and to the narratives he crafted for American donors. Although he noted that in time he would again see things in the “proper perspective,” Friedman recognized that American Jews lacked a deep identification with and understanding of the problems faced by the Jews in Europe.³⁸

Yet, Friedman sought to make his experiences understandable to his American audience and described the spiritual strength and courage of survivors to highlight American values. As such, Friedman’s 1946 letter reads like an effort to establish greater compassion for DPs among his constituents: “You might think...that the DPs themselves, homeless and without future, living on a marginal standard, would be the first to be bitter and disillusioned. / Dear friends, the opposite is true – the exact opposite. The Jewish DPs in Germany today have a strength of spirit, a measure of courage which I have never seen anywhere else.”³⁹ Here, Friedman complicates the depiction of ragged and harried Jewish survivors running from Poland and shoving themselves on transports by offering an optimistic and hopeful narrative. In an attempt to push his constituents beyond their “petty” problems, he sent the following New Year’s wish: “May the year 5707 bring you strength and happiness and a deep thankfulness that you are in a position to help with all your resources.”⁴⁰

³⁸ Seen in this context, Friedman’s concern about the priorities of his congregants seems to support Alvin Rosenfeld’s concern (five decades later) that Americans had no interest in confronting the realities of the Holocaust. Rosenfeld wrote, “It is part of the American ethos to stress goodness, innocence, optimism, liberty, diversity, and equality. It is part of the same ethos to downplay or deny the dark and brutal sides of life and instead to place a preponderant emphasis on the saving power of individual moral conduct and collective deeds of redemption. Americans prefer to think affirmatively and progressively. The tragic vision, therefore, is antithetical to the American way of seeing the world...” Rosenfeld, “The Americanization of the Holocaust,” 123.

³⁹ Letter from Friedman to “Dear Friends,” August 30, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

When Friedman returned to the U.S., his appeals became more explicit and his insistence that American Jewish intervention was the only answer to Jewish suffering in Europe became more acute. The transformation of his personal story into a more pointed appeal is most dramatically expressed at the June 1947 Emergency UJA Conference in Wernersburg, PA. This “Crisis Event” brought together 300 UJA leaders to respond to the urgent call for cash from Dr. Joseph Schwartz, Chairman of the European Executive Council of the JDC. Schwartz warned that the end of UNRRA activities and the U.S. Army feeding program for DPs on July 1, 1947, in addition to the inadequacy of IRO efforts, would lead to disastrous results for the Jewish survivors.⁴¹ To generate the needed response, UJA General Chairman, Henry Morgenthau, Jr. assembled community leaders and invited a number of key officials that could “assure first hand interpretation of the picture as it now exists.”⁴² The list of witnesses with “first hand” knowledge of the situation in Europe included General Joseph McNarney, former Commander of American Forces in Europe, Dr. Schwartz, Eliazer Kaplan, Treasurer of the Jewish Agency, and Rabbi Friedman.

Friedman passionately addressed the crowd about the current situation of DPs and the immediate needs of Jewish survivors, becoming so heated that he apologized at the end of his speech.⁴³ But, the central narrative he presented to the audience was about the Jews escaping from Poland. He echoed his earlier correspondence: “The Jews came running to us. They didn’t

⁴¹ ‘Crisis Meeting’ Called by Mr. Morgenthau on June 7-8,” *UJA Campaigner*, Vol II: 21 (June 2, 1947) 1, Box 39, HAFP/AJA.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Friedman said, “I am sorry about what I said to Mr. Firestein from Los Angeles. I was really pretty emotional, and you could tell it from my voice before. I was pretty burned up, so I apologize to him and to everybody now for having blown my top. But I have lived with these people for a year and a half.” Transcript of Friedman’s Speech, June 8, 1947, 100, Box 23, Folder 1, HAFP/AJA.

stop, they didn't wait, they came across borders."⁴⁴ The trajectory of the story that followed was similar to that of the 1946 letter and absent speech – the frenetic pace of Jews escaping Poland remained palpable. But, in speaking to the UJA leaders, Friedman added more explicit rhetorical devices that engaged his audience and connected their efforts with the drama of the story. Speaking in person, Friedman shifted the tense of his story from past to present and employed a second person narrative, both of which more effectively conveyed an immediacy of the survivor experience and inserted the audience directly into the action.

For example, Friedman declared, "Take a bunch of people on a truck. Make them throw all the baggage away so you can get one or two more people on that truck, and you have saved another life or two."⁴⁵ Using "you" to engage his audience invited more direct participation in the action and signified a marked alteration to the story. In the 1946 absent speech, Friedman said that the survivors "fought" to get on the truck and passively noted that, "baggage was thrown." The more active "you" accentuated the role of UJA (not to mention the individual UJA leaders) in saving individual lives, a point reiterated as his speech continued: "Your money – that's what helped. When they gave a kid on the border at Austria a cup of hot chocolate, it was your money."⁴⁶ In this way, Friedman constructed a story about the desperation of Jews after the Kielce Pogrom that depended on the philanthropic work of American Jewish donors and

⁴⁴ Ibid., 81.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 82.

translated the financial donations of UJA leaders in the audience into direct objects that saved lives.⁴⁷

Friedman continued to speak directly to his audience, using “you” to arouse and awaken their personal identification with the events in Europe and, in so doing, also responded to Morgenthau’s call to assess the situation of Jews in Europe. The second person “you” forced audience members to identify with Jews in DP camp as Friedman painted a detailed picture of postwar life:

Life in a camp means getting up in the morning, trying to dress yourself with the other six or seven or eight people who are in the room. And don’t talk to me about privacy. If they are lucky and they had a blanket to spare, they would spread a blanket across the room to divide one bed from another bed. One couple could live alone behind a blanket. If they didn’t have a blanket to spare, which was more often the case than not, everybody slept together – a husband, wife, six, eight, nine people in a room. You get up in the morning, and you try to get yourself warm, because the buildings were wooden shacks most of the time, and the dew would seep in and the blankets would have a thin film of ice on them in the morning; and you would try to shake yourself warm...⁴⁸

Friedman continued at length, walking the audience through a whole day of DP life, from the lack of sugar and milk with oatmeal for breakfast, to the “tiny precious butt of a cigarette” they might enjoy, to the dreary emptiness of the day ahead. He detailed the complications of everyday life: the monotony of canned food at lunch and the possibility that new supplies would not arrive from Bremerhaven. Like his story about Polish Jews, Friedman’s representation of DP life did not reveal the stories of individual survivors nor their experiences during the war. As such, American Jews first conceived of survivors through their postwar challenges because American

⁴⁷ It’s also telling that the specific example used by Friedman here depicted a child. Chapter four explicitly examines the place of children as representatives for the larger DP problem.

⁴⁸ Transcript of Friedman’s Speech, June 8, 1947, 83, Box 23, Folder 1, HAFP/AJA.

intermediaries were witness to the postwar realities upon liberation and in DP camps. The postwar also became a central event for an early American Jewish understanding of the Holocaust because this was the crisis American Jews could alleviate. American Jewish philanthropy could not minimize the loss or the trauma of the Holocaust, but they could alleviate the hunger, displacement, and over crowding of the postwar period, so those stories made more potent appeals.

Friedman's ability to express the connection between Jewish survival in Europe and American Jewish philanthropy made him a powerful and sought after speaker on the UJA circuit and his knack for riling up a crowd is evident in a fourth articulation of his story. On April 11, 1948, Friedman addressed a crowd of 10,000 in St. Louis.⁴⁹ The speech was part of the opening event for the 1948 campaign and Friedman spoke in the middle of the program, between choral performances of "God Bless America" and "Rock of Ages," under the title "The Appeal of our Rabbis."⁵⁰ In preparation for the event, he edited the transcript of his 1947 Emergency Appeal speech, customizing his address for a larger and more diverse audience. In communication with event planners, Friedman noted that the speech was "pithy...direct, forthright, and not couched in particularly elegant language."⁵¹ This was not modesty; rather, Friedman recognized that "it does not make as good reading as it does speaking." His awareness of specific oral practices

⁴⁹ Letter from Bernard Schramm to Friedman, March 24, 1948, Box 23, Folder 3, HAFP/AJA.

⁵⁰ Event Program, April 11, 1948, Box 23, Folder 3, HAFP/AJA.

⁵¹ Letter from Friedman to Bernard Schramm, April 5, 1948, Box 23, Folder 3, HAFP/AJA.

informs the changes he made to the speech and also the differences between the written letter from 1946 and the other versions of his story that were meant to be spoken aloud.⁵²

A direct comparison of the 1947 speech and its reworked articulation in 1948 reveals Friedman's oratory strategies. In the June 1947 speech, Friedman addressed the audience as "you." This dialogic approach was meant to provoke the assembled leaders, as he said, "You've got two jobs...you have got to feed them...because no one else is going to feed them...and the second thing, you have got to get them out."⁵³ In St. Louis, Friedman changed each instance in which he said "you" to "we," so that he addressed the larger crowd of donors saying, "We've got two jobs" and "we have got to feed them."⁵⁴ In this iteration, Friedman made himself part of the collective and also reshaped the end of his address into a more forceful appeal. Rather than calling on the assembled leaders to find a way out of Europe for the survivors, he begged the assembled donors to give and rooted this request in the tragedy of the Holocaust, saying, "6,000,000 were killed – they are dead and burned – and they now cost us nothing to support – they are cheap. The million and a half alive are expensive – we must help them, at any cost – I beg you to give."⁵⁵ Despite his continued articulation of the postwar challenges of the surviving Jews of Europe, this rhetorical ploy serves as a reminder that the Holocaust and the figure of 6 million remained a central point of reference both for his story and for American Jewish donors.

⁵² There is evidence that Friedman recorded what I am calling the "absent speech" in September 1946, but no conclusion about whether the speech was played at the Campaign Dinner or read by someone else from Friedman's transcript. Telegram text from Chaplain Friedman to Charles Rosenbaum, September 11, 1946, Box 1, Folder 4, HAFP/AJA.

⁵³ Transcript of Friedman's Speech, June 8, 1947, Box 23, Folder 1, HAFP/AJA.

⁵⁴ Inserted hand-written note in Transcript of Friedman's Speech, June 8, 1947, Box 23, Folder 1, HAFP/AJA.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

In each of these settings, Rabbi Friedman conveyed his experience visiting Poland in the wake of the Kielce Pogrom and depicted the sense of “being there” as Polish Jews feverishly sought to escape to the American Zone of Europe. In print, he best conveyed the overlapping stories of his own enthusiasm, the desperation of survivors in the postwar, and the role American Jews could play in postwar intervention. From America, he gave a “pithy” speech to the leaders of UJA and passionately invited the audience to consider themselves in the DP camps and envision the fear and chaos of the postwar world. For a larger audience in St. Louis, he revealed even more passion, allowing his concern for the DPs to spill over to anger and frustration. As the story was shaped for each new audience and each new setting, Friedman focused on the need for American philanthropy abroad and conveyed a passion that strengthened his authority as an eyewitness to the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Cecilia Razovsky and the imperative to listen

Cecilia Razovsky (Davidson) also worked to narrativize her experiences with survivors in order to raise awareness and action among American Jews.⁵⁶ Like Friedman, she became a sought after speaker for Jewish organizations after serving in Europe at the Paris JDC office. Razovsky began her career with refugees teaching English to immigrants at evening school in St. Louis before becoming an inspector in the child labor division of the US Children’s Bureau from 1917 – 1920. For the next two decades, Razovsky took on numerous leadership roles at the National Council of Jewish Women, serving as their Secretary for Immigrant Aid Department

⁵⁶ I will refer to her as Cecilia Razovsky throughout the chapter. All articles written by Razovsky are published with this name and in relevant scholarship her maiden name is similarly used. See Bat-Ami Zucker, *Cecilia Razovsky and the American Jewish Women’s Rescue Operations in the Second World War* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

and Associate Director after 1932. Through these efforts, Razovsky became a leader in the field of refugee relief nationally and internationally and it is not surprising that she was enlisted to organize JDC's efforts with Displaced Persons at the end of the war and sent to Europe in the fall of 1944. From her office in Paris, Razovsky managed all aspects of DP work: she served as chaperone for transports of child survivors from Germany to France, collected and organized lists of surviving Jews, communicated requests for lost family members between points across the continent, and juggled logistics for survivors who arrived in DP zones, crossed illegally into France, or needed medical attention. This work allowed Razovsky to meet with countless survivors, learn about their experiences under Nazism, and recognize the challenges they faced in the postwar.

From this vantage point, Razovsky understood the potential for the first hand knowledge she gained for American Jewish fundraising. On June 12, 1945, she wrote to her husband that her busy schedule kept her from serving as a better witness for friends and family "because they could have used the material for their fundraising."⁵⁷ Her conviction that she could help facilitate action at home came from a sense of being there, as she wrote, "I am right here, in the middle of things."⁵⁸ To underscore this point, she also collected materials to be used in JDC publicity and

⁵⁷ Letter from Cecilia Razovsky to Dr. Morris Davidson (her husband), June 12, 1945, Box 1, Folder 4, Cecilia Razovsky Papers (CRP), American Jewish Historical Society (AJHS). Other aid workers similarly understood the relationship between their experiences and fundraising at home. A letter from an American Red Cross worker, Sylvia Neulander, asked her friend, Alice, to share the letter with "your Hadassah friends so that they know what goes on here." However, Neulander's appeal was not for money or for political change, but to spread knowledge about injustices she experienced. She described an anti-Semitic encounter with the U.S. Military and a disappointing experience with Razovsky and other JDC workers. Neulander wanted her American "Hadassah" friends to cease support for JDC because she disagreed with their approach to postwar aid. Letter from Sylvia Neulander to Alice, June 8, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁵⁸ Letter from Cecilia Razovsky to Dr. Morris Davidson, June 12, 1945, Box 1, Folder 4, CRP/AJHS.

hoped the stories of those she worked with would become well known at home.⁵⁹ Although Razovsky returned early from her fieldwork in June 1945, she did not stop sharing her experiences and her work as a secondary witness began in earnest once she returned home. She was quickly employed by UNRRA to speak on their behalf and by October 1945 was officially transferred to the office of public information to give regular speeches.⁶⁰ In 1946, she began speaking regularly for JDC and continued to address both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences throughout this period.⁶¹

Razovsky gave countless speeches between 1945 and 1950, but I want to explore one particular example in depth. It offers a sense of how Razovsky crafted her public narratives and represented survivors in relation to her own experience. This example also exposes early efforts to make sense of the Holocaust and calls attention to Razovsky's assertion that aid workers should serve as listeners to the stories of survivors, an idea still resonant in contemporary testimony culture. On July 24, 1945, Razovsky spoke at a YMCA in Washington, DC to UNRRA staff members about the interaction between UNRRA and private agencies.⁶² Her talk, tailored to the audience, addressed the chaos of postwar Europe, the struggle of DPs to return home and find lost family, and the limitations of UNRRA efforts. She tried to convey the value

⁵⁹ For example, she wrote to Morris: "Tonight a young doctor came to see me; he has just arrived from a camp where he took care of the brother-in-law of a very important person in the USA and I am cabling details to the office first thing in the morning. You will recognize the story when you see it in the press." Ibid.

⁶⁰ Letter from Olive L. Sawyer, Assistant Chief of Groups Liaison, Office of Public Information, UNRRA, October 8, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁶¹ Razovsky described how her work in Europe necessitated overlap between UNRRA and JDC, saying "There are times when working for UNRRA is valuable, especially while traveling; but there are places where the UNRRA flash is not welcome and then the private organization flash is more helpful." Sylvia Milrod, "Collected Notes on Lecture Cecilia Razovsky Davidson," July 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁶² Ibid. These notes include long direct quotes from Razovsky and mark the most complete account of Razovsky's approach to speaking engagements.

and urgency of working with DPs while also recognizing the challenges that hampered more overwhelming success.

In expressing these particular lessons, Razovsky relied on stories about survivors she worked with and included a particularly long story about Bela Fabian, a former member of the Hungarian Parliament, which serves as a revealing entry point for examining Razovsky's narrative.⁶³ Unlike Friedman, Razovsky told her audience about one individual and conveyed his experience during the war as a complete story. Fabian was fifty-four years old when he was deported and had been assumed dead because of his age, but Razovsky reported that Fabian "was smart enough to say he was 44 instead of 54 and he was put in a work camp. Workers were sent out early in the morning and worked until late at night and beaten and harassed! It is remarkable that he lived."⁶⁴ She explained that because he was well known, men in the camp helped him and covered for him, because "they felt that if Fabian lived he could be their spokesman and therefore they must save his life." In this way, Razovsky highlighted the value Jewish victims of Nazism placed on living in order to bear witness, an idea well documented by Holocaust scholars.⁶⁵ Razovsky's initial response to hearing and retelling the experiences of survivors thus anticipated contemporary scholarship about survival.

⁶³ Bela Fabian was a founder of the Hungarian Liberal Party and former head of the opposition in the Hungarian Parliament under the pro-Nazi regime of Admiral Horthy. He emigrated to the U.S. in 1948 and became a vocal anti-Communist. Fabian died in December 1996.

⁶⁴ Sylvia Milrod, "Collected Notes on Lecture Cecilia Razovsky Davidson," July 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁶⁵ Much has been written about the need to bear witness that motivated many Jews towards survival. Terrence DesPres said that the impulse to bear witness was so embedded in the will to survive that "survival and bearing witness became reciprocal acts." Terrence T. DesPres, *The Survivor: An Anatomy of Life in the Death Camps* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 32. See also, Alexandra Garbarini, *Numbered Days: Diaries and the Holocaust* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) and Zoë Waxman, *Writing the Holocaust: Identity, Testimony, Representation*, Oxford Historical Monographs (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

Yet, in other ways, her response reveals how little was known about the Holocaust at that time. Particularly revealing is the way Razovsky identified that Fabian was “smart enough” to survive. That she sought to make sense of the Holocaust in this way was mirrored in a report she filed for JDC on May 25, 1945 that detailed her visit to a local relief office. She wrote at length about two Jewish Polish girls who had survived the war together: one had lost her father and brother in the “Camp,” but had found her mother when she returned to Paris and the other “saw her parents taken to the crematorium with her three sisters and one brother.”⁶⁶ After reporting that JDC had arranged to take care of both girls, Razovsky noted, “The one girl showed such qualities of leadership that one could see why she had survived inspite [sic] of all the hardships they had endured at Auschwitz.”⁶⁷ Razovsky’s sense that strategic decision-making dictated who survived Auschwitz reflects an early postwar attempt to understand the Holocaust. In the decades since, luck has become the prominent framework for understanding who survived and who didn’t, particularly in concentration camp settings, although this idea is not without contention.⁶⁸

Nonetheless, Razovsky’s attempt to comprehend of the arbitrary nature of death in the Final Solution makes sense. Christopher Browning noted that even upon accepting a complex understanding of the Holocaust that included indiscriminate death, our attempt to “transform

⁶⁶ Report, May 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ That luck has been the dominant framework for understanding survival demonstrates the primacy of survivor testimony in telling the story of the Holocaust. Primo Levi’s *Survival in Auschwitz* is perhaps the most significant proponent of this idea. In response to the survivor assertion that luck defined survival, scholars continue to interrogate the relationship between agency and survival, see, for example, Carolyn Ellis and Jerry Rawicki, “More Than Mazel? Luck and Agency in Surviving the Holocaust,” *Journal of Loss and Trauma* 19, no. 2 (2014): 99–120 and Ronald J. Berger, *Surviving the Holocaust: A Life Course Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2011). Other scholars connect survival of the Holocaust to postwar success and construct happy endings over a longer timeline, see William B. Helmreich, *Against All Odds: Holocaust Survivors and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992).

these narratives into tales of redemption and triumph” is “understandable.”⁶⁹ Lawrence Langer justifies this inclination because we are “trained in the necessity of moral choice to preserve the integrity of civilized behavior.”⁷⁰ Yet, Langer warns that we cannot attribute this sense of civility to an understanding of the Holocaust, where “belief in choice betrayed the victim and turned out to be an illusion.”⁷¹ In this way, Langer rejects any possibility for making sense of why some people survived, even if, as Ruth Kluger has argued, “survivors themselves sought to make order out of their experiences.”⁷² Razovsky’s depiction of survival in Fabian’s case might, therefore, have been a reproduction of how he made sense of his own experience. However, the survivors in David Boder’s interview project rejected his similar attempt to render survival and punishment understandable.⁷³ Razovsky’s reaction serves as reminders to the shock of the Holocaust by betraying her own disorientation in the face of survivor witnessing.

⁶⁹ Christopher R. Browning, *Collected Memories: Holocaust History and Postwar Testimony* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 38.

⁷⁰ Lawrence L. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: the ruins of memory* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 33.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Ruth Kluger, “Discussing Holocaust Literature,” *Simon Wiesenthal Annual*, 2 (1985), 187.

⁷³ David Boder hoped to make sense of the stories he heard and tried to assert rationality to explain survival. He repeatedly interrupted his interviewees to clarify their story. Alan Rosen describes these interruptions as moments of perplexity and cites Boder’s interview with Marko Moskowitz to illustrate his point. He writes that Boder “had trouble following the account because Moskowitz’s description of people “often alive” being burned in pits goes against the grain of what is usual, even in times of war.” Thus, the lack of understanding that occurs again and again throughout Boder’s interviews reflects more than his own confusion. Boder repeatedly asked his interviewees, “Why?” and when he asked Jürgen Bassfreund why he was beaten, Bassfreund responded, “Why? Most people didn’t know why.” Just as Boder could not assimilate the idea of people being burned alive into his conception of the world, neither could he understand that people were beaten without reason and killed without discretion. Alan Rosen, *The wonder of their voices: the 1946 Holocaust interviews of David Boder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010) 5. David P. Boder, *Topical autobiographies of displaced people recorded verbatim in displaced persons camps with a psychological and anthropological analysis* (Chicago and Los Angeles: D.P. Boder, 1950 - 1957), Moskowitz, vol 15, chapter 63. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, Jürgen Gastfreund, 37. In *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, Boder changed Jürgen Bassfreund’s name to Gastfreund and changed it back later in *Topical Autobiographies*.

Razovsky's interaction with Fabian additionally reveals how survivor witnessing cut through that initial perplexity. Razovsky notes of her first meeting with Fabian: "He had to wait and he carried on terribly because I was keeping him waiting; the whole world should stop to hear his story and we were keeping him waiting...after I talked with him for ten minutes, I thought he was justified in having us stop what we were doing to listen to him and his companions."⁷⁴ She continued, highlighting the importance of the stories that survivors had to tell, and exclaimed, "They came like messiahs, they came from another world and they have a message for us. We must, some of us, stop and listen to what they have to say."⁷⁵ Here, Razovsky called attention to her position as a secondary witness and urged other social workers to aspire to that position. Fabian could not tell his story directly to American audiences at the time, so Razovsky did so in his place. The story Americans heard, therefore, was not Fabian's, but Fabian's as experienced by Razovsky.

It is particularly intriguing that Razovsky identified survivors as "messiahs" from "another world." These two ideas, although connected, suggest two different ways of understanding who survivors were and continue to define who survivors are. That survivors have become messengers with something vital to impart has been associated most strongly with Elie Wiesel, "the spokesman for the Holocaust and for the meaning of Jewish life and thought."⁷⁶ Through decades of writing and speaking as a "professional survivor," Wiesel has cultivated the

⁷⁴ Sylvia Milrod, "Collected Notes on Lecture Cecilia Razovsky Davidson," July 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Maurice Freidman, *Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: You are My Witnesses* (New York, NY, 1987), viii.

idea that “the survivor...has been transformed into the ‘messenger’.”⁷⁷ Wiesel has also articulated Razovsky’s second assertion — that survivors come from another world — a world that those who did not experience the Holocaust could never understand. He has repeatedly asserted that the world of the Holocaust is impenetrable for those who did not experience it. In 1978, Wiesel rhetorically approached this idea by writing, “Concentration camp language...negated all other language...it became a wall.” To which he asked, “Can the reader be brought to the other side?” and answered, “I knew the answer to be negative.” Nonetheless, Wiesel writes to turn the “no” into a “yes.”⁷⁸ Lawrence Langer similarly recognizes a gap between the world of the Holocaust and our contemporary world and throughout his “20 year confrontation” with the Holocaust, he has argued that to understand it one must have “the courage to stare into the abyss.”⁷⁹ In other words, Langer insists that the Holocaust established a great rupture, but through listening to testimony and confronting the stories of survivors, one can jump the chasm.

While they both advance Razovsky’s early sense that the Holocaust defined another world, Wiesel and Langer offer opposing assessments of the otherness of the Holocaust. For Wiesel, there is no way to understand and for Langer, imagination and compassion (and testimony) can bridge the distance. In 1945, in the direct shadow of the Holocaust, Razovsky identified the role of survivors as messengers, but did not engage in the epistemological

⁷⁷ James Young as quoted in Christopher Browning, *Collected Memories*, 38. Wiesel has articulated this idea in many ways, in 1965, he wrote, that the victims of the Holocaust “persist in surviving – not only to survive, but to give testimony. The victims elect to become witnesses.” Elie Wiesel, *One Generation After* (New York: Random House, 1965), 38. For a criticism of Wiesel’s role as the “professional survivor,” see Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing*.

⁷⁸ Elie Wiesel, “Why I Write,” in *Confronting the Holocaust: The Impact of Elie Wiesel*, ed. Alvin H. Rosenfeld and Irving Greenberg, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 201.

⁷⁹ Lawrence L. Langer, *Admitting the Holocaust: Collected Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 68, 8.

questions of Wiesel or Langer. Rather, she told the UNRRA audience, “Their hard-to-believe stories were nerve wracking, but some of us must listen. If UNRRA workers and workers of [f] private organizations do nothing else but give the time and listen to their stories, we will have helped them and made a contribution and rendered a service.”⁸⁰ Razovsky’s commitment to listening as a service rendered more directly anticipates Henry Greenspan’s insistence that our job is not to jump the chasm or climb the wall to another world, but to listen. As a trained psychologist who has conducted interviews with Holocaust survivors for over 20 years, Greenspan recognizes that survivors become witnesses through the process of retelling, which he describes as an unfinished process. In this way, he best fulfills the call of Cecilia Razovsky by recognizing that “the essential truth is that survivors recount in order to be heard.”⁸¹

For Razovsky, the impulse to listen informed how she told the stories of survivors to American audiences. Believing that “We can’t ever let such a thing happen again,” she spoke across America as a way to make Americans understand what she had seen.⁸² Her impulse points to the relationship between listening and telling that Terrence Des Pres later articulated, saying, “having crossed a threshold of moral being by our reception of the survivor’s voice, we are moved by a sense of obligation to pass it on, to transmit the survivor’s testimony so that others may be likewise inspired and transformed.”⁸³ Razovsky understood the importance of

⁸⁰ Sylvia Milrod, “Collected Notes on Lecture Cecilia Razovsky Davidson,” July 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁸¹ Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History* (Westport, CT and London: Praeger, 1998), 6.

⁸² Sylvia Milrod, “Collected Notes on Lecture Cecilia Razovsky Davidson,” July 25, 1945, Box 6, Folder 1, CRP/AJHS.

⁸³ Terrence Des Pres, introduction to *Legacy of Night, the Literary Universe of Elie Wiesel*, ed. Ellen S. Fine (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1982), xiii.

transmitting stories in the moral sense that des Pres later claims and sought to begin the work of “never again.”

In the postwar period, the work of “never again” started with raising money for Jewish communal organizations and Razovsky took her story on the road, acting as a successful speaker for Jewish organizations. She toured the east coast, the American South, and, in October 1946, she went to Cuba and South America, spending time in Havana, Sao Paulo, and other “Latin American communities” to meet with Jewish leaders and translate her experiences directly into a fundraising appeal.⁸⁴ Razovsky travelled to Brazil with Rabbi Isaiah Rackovsky, a chaplain employed by JDC’s Speaker’s Bureau bringing multiple postwar perspectives to the Jews of South America. The JDC had a robust network, sending speakers to large regional campaign events and small local committee meetings; speakers travelled across the country, from Alabama to Texas, West Virginia, New Jersey, Michigan, Colorado, and California, speaking to local Hillel groups, SOS committees, Hadassah groups, and were invited onto pulpits to speak to directly to congregations.⁸⁵ Through this network, Jews across the country (and across the world) heard first hand accounts of the postwar condition in Europe. They heard stories about survivors through the lens of Americans, so that the accounts of secondary witnesses spread at a faster rate than survivor accounts in this period.

⁸⁴ From 1946 – 1950, Razovsky spoke on behalf of JDC to groups of all sizes, addressing meetings and events sponsored by NCJW, Hadassah, B’nai B’rith, and local synagogues. She travelled the entire east coast and the American south throughout this period. JDC Weekly Review, Vol II: 41-42 (October 16, 1946), Reel 112, IS 6/3, JDC Archives-Jerusalem, Istanbul Office (JDC-J), USHMM Collection Division. Letter to Cecilia Razovsky, June 22, 1946, Reports on Meetings held on behalf of UJA Campaign, addressed by Cecilia Razovsky, and Field Report from Mobile, AL, November 9, 1950, Box 6, Folder 9, CRP/AJHS.

⁸⁵ JDC Weekly Reviews (1946 – 1950), Reel 112, IS 6/3, JDC-J/USHMM.

Creating secondary witnesses for postwar fundraising

Razovsky was not the only aid worker to introduce stories of survivors to American audiences. Let me offer one additional example to detail the pace and breadth of the speakers who served as secondary witnesses for American Jewish organizations. Leo Lania, author of *The Nine Lives of Europe*, lived in Europe in the postwar period working as a correspondent for *United Nations World* magazine.⁸⁶ Upon returning home, Lania joined the staff of JDC and became an active speaker on their behalf. In the weeks following his return to JDC, Lania spoke to meetings of JDC Educational and B'nai B'rith committees in Newark, NJ on September 10 and Maplewood, NJ on September 12. On September 15, he spoke at a campaign committee meeting in Far Rockaway, NY and in the following week visited Caldwell, NJ, Philadelphia, PA, and Morristown, NJ.⁸⁷ In October, he toured the Eastern Seaboard, traveling from Philadelphia on October 2 to Bristol, TN, Knoxville, TN, Norfolk, VA and back to Jersey City and Elizabeth, Hillside, and Kearney, NJ by October 22. From October 23-31, Lania went to the Eastern coast of Canada to speak to the Jewish communities of the Maritime Provinces.⁸⁸ In this capacity, Lania told stories about his experiences in Europe and served as a witness to the survivors he had met abroad to almost the entire Eastern Seaboards of both America and Canada in only two months.

These examples highlight the extent of the JDC network that relied on secondary witnesses to spread knowledge about survivors and translate that knowledge into fundraising.

⁸⁶ Leo Lania, *The Nine Lives of Europe* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls in association with United Nations World, 1950).

⁸⁷ JDC Weekly Review, II:37 (September 13, 1946) and II:41-42 (October 16, 1946), Reel 112, IS 6/3, JDC-J/USHMM.

⁸⁸ JDC Weekly Review, Vol II: 43 (October 25, 1946), Reel 112, IS 6/3, JDC-J/USHMM.

UJA and other organizations so valued these kinds of personalized eyewitness stories that they sent their leaders to Europe to take on the legitimacy of “seeing for themselves.” Leaders from all Jewish organizations toured the DP camps of Europe, met with survivors, and reported back to donors about the impact of their dollars. In January 1948, the UJA sent forty Jewish leaders to Europe and Palestine on a trip titled the “Star of Hope.” The trip was as much publicity stunt as it was witnessing mission: a TWA flight was chartered to fly from Los Angeles to Chicago to New York before departing for France, Germany, Italy, and Palestine. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that the leaders made the “trip at their own expense,” but events were organized in LA, Chicago, and New York to support the 1948 \$250,000,000 UJA campaign.⁸⁹ The trip was intended to allow Jewish leaders from around the country to “study the needs of 1,500,000 Jews left on the continent” and “upon their return to the U.S. the leaders will report to the American public on the actual needs of the Jews of Europe.”⁹⁰ The “Star of Hope” reveals the value placed on eyewitnessing in the period that was not related to the Holocaust as the central event.

These Jewish leaders saw themselves as important actors poised at a significant turning point in Jewish history, as Irving Rhodes, chairman of the overseas delegation, was quoted as saying, “We are fully aware of the fact that this overseas mission comes at a time when the entire course of Jewish history for centuries to come will be determined.”⁹¹ That eyewitnessing played a central role in understanding their own importance is significant; Rhodes was also quoted

⁸⁹ “Forty Jewish Leaders Leave by Plane for Europe and Palestine on U.J.A. Mission,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 28, 1948, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.jta.org/1948/01/28/archive/forty-jewish-leaders-leave-by-plane-for-europe-and-palestine-on-u-j-a-mission>.

⁹⁰ Press Release, January 16, 1948, Box 23, Folder 3, HAFP/AJA.

⁹¹ “Forty Jewish Leaders Leave by Plane for Europe and Palestine on U.J.A. Mission,” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 28, 1948, accessed April 18, 2014, <http://www.jta.org/1948/01/28/archive/forty-jewish-leaders-leave-by-plane-for-europe-and-palestine-on-u-j-a-mission>.

reiterating the need for personal experience, saying, “We are undertaking this arduous flying trip to study at first hand” the needs of Jewish survivors in Europe and “to see for ourselves” the challenges in Palestine that must be addressed in 1948.⁹² As such, the ability to report on the needs abroad, not just from those living or working there, but through the experiences of Jewish leaders was a key element in postwar American Jewish philanthropy, but one significantly more staged. Jewish leaders were toured around and their experiences abroad were curated to celebrate their humanitarian work, not to dwell in the messiness and danger of the postwar period.

This culture of secondary witnessing was not only prevalent in UJA and JDC; Hadassah also sent leaders abroad so they could bring back personal stories. In 1947, Tamara de Sola Poole, Gisella Wyzanski, and Martha Sharp embarked on a trip to tour the DP camps of Europe, Cyprus, and Palestine. The three women spoke about their experiences and reported on the situation facing Jews abroad at a meeting of local committees later on that year.⁹³ Tamara de Sola Poole, Hadassah’s representative on the Youth Management Committee of the Jewish Agency’s Youth Aliyah Bureau, published numerous accounts of her experience at the Cyprus detention center. In June 1947, she wrote “a first hand story of today’s Wandering Jew” in *The Exiles on Cyprus* and an account of her trip was also published for Hadassah members in *Hadassah Headlines* in May 1947.⁹⁴ Like Friedman, de Sola Poole evoked the mythic story of wandering Jews to frame the journeys of Jewish survivors within a long history of Jewish displacement and to accentuate the need for a Jewish state. Sharp served as an important witness in representing the needs of Jews to non-Jewish Americans; she spoke across New England

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Meeting Announcement, Box 18, Folder 119, YAP/Hadassah.

⁹⁴ Tamara de Sola Poole, *The Exiles on Cyprus*, (Survey Associates, 1947). Correspondence and copies of publications, Box 25, Folder 181, YAP/Hadassah.

about the need for a Jewish state and led the advocacy and fundraising group “Children for Palestine.”⁹⁵

Framing appeals through the lens of “my own eyes” was thus part of the strategy for postwar Jewish philanthropy and generated a culture of witnessing that crafted and preserved witness accounts of the postwar and the secondary accounts of survivors. As the “Star of Hope” proved, sending Americans to become witnesses was also part of a publicity strategy that called attention to the needs of Jews abroad and spread awareness for annual fundraising campaigns. The transformation of personal stories into fundraising appeals both sustained the connection between Jewish fundraising in the United States and survivor needs abroad and defined stories of survivors through American motifs and the language of organizational interests.

The politics of secondary witnessing

The value of these secondary witnesses in the postwar period extended beyond fundraising for Jewish organizations; individuals also became powerful voices in the political realm, advocating for American immigration reform and justifying a Jewish state. Towards these ideological ends, secondary witnesses translated survivor experiences into stories that reflected American values of democracy and industriousness. Fundraising materials highlighted the need for immigration and organizations like United Service for New Americans (USNA) and

⁹⁵ Board Minutes from the November 26, 1946 meeting document the negotiated arrangement with Martha Sharp, Box 18, Folder 119, YAP/Hadassah. Martha Sharp was an important witness for Hadassah, converting the urgency of postwar Jewish emigration for non-Jewish audiences through her organization. For more about Martha Sharp, see Susan Elisabeth Subak, *Rescue & Flight: American Relief Workers Who Defied the Nazis* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010). In 2005, Martha Sharp was posthumously recognized as a Righteous Among the Gentiles by Yad Vashem for her work, with her husband, saving Lion Feuchtwanger from the Nazis and assisting Jews from France and Czechoslovakia avoid deportation. For more: <http://db.yadvashem.org/righteous/family.html?language=en&itemId=5600148>.

Hadassah specifically raised funds around the needs of immigrants, but the question of international emigration was one that played out on the political stage and Jewish communal leaders relied on the power of eyewitness accounts to argue for more lenient quotas for both Palestine and the United States.

Leo Srole, a University of Chicago trained sociologist, served as a military psychologist for the U.S. Air Force during the war and remained in Europe as UNRRA Welfare Director in the Landsberg DP camp from 1945 – 1946. In 1947, he published “Why the DPs Can’t Wait” in *Commentary* as a contribution to the immigration debate at home.⁹⁶ In the article, Srole documented the failure of liberation to bring about freedom for Jewish survivors, writing, “twenty months later [the liberated Jew] is still captive and still in jeopardy...the victims *still* await final rescue.”⁹⁷ While he noted the resiliency of Jewish victims, he did not use the term “survivor” because he felt they were not yet freed from captivity and suffering. From his position at Landsberg, Srole reported a very different picture of DP life than Friedman; the DPs Srole worked with were not running or fleeing. Rather, they were productive and forward thinking. He described the schools established, libraries organized and utilized, newspapers created and published, elections held, and work training conducted.⁹⁸ His social scientific description of life in the DP camps reflected his academic training and offered a starkly different assessment of DP life than Friedman’s emotional appeal for funds.

He used his story of Jewish life in Landsberg to argue for an open door immigration policy, suggesting that 100,000 Jews and 45,000 orphans should settle in Palestine and 175,000

⁹⁶ Leo Srole, “Why the DPs can’t wait: proposing an international plan of rescue,” *Commentary*, 3 (1947): 13 – 47.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

Jews be absorbed by each of the occupying nations. He wrote, “A million lives are at stake. Also at stake are our own professed humane and democratic standards.”⁹⁹ As such, he made the story of the Holocaust universal, adopting the American ideals of freedom and democracy for political potency. Srole’s productive and industrious Jews were better primed to make an argument for immigration than the desperate Jews of Friedman’s story, who could pull at the heartstrings of American Jewish donors. Despite these differences, both Srole and Friedman recognized the value of their eye-witnessing in interpreting the challenges of the postwar for American Jews and crafted stories that sought to transform their own experiences in Europe into immediate action in America.

Jewish leaders also gave congressional testimony as part of two active domestic debates: the future of a Jewish state in Palestine and the effort to reform American immigration.¹⁰⁰ Both political concerns were related to the need for Jewish survivors to get out of Europe and Jewish leaders evoked the experiences of seeing the survivors to strengthen their case. In January 1946, Dr. Joseph J. Schwartz, European Director of JDC, testified before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry.¹⁰¹ In his testimony, Schwartz spoke directly about the Jews he worked with in Europe and asserted their desire to move to Palestine. He described the children in particular who suffered in the concentration camps and “have seen their mothers and fathers

⁹⁹ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰⁰ The role of Jewish communal organizations in each of these political battles deserves concerted attention, which it will not receive here. I raise these examples only to address how the role of secondary witnesses and the authority of “being there” was not only employed to raise funds, but to advocate for political solutions as well.

¹⁰¹ Schwartz followed Earl G. Harrison at the inquiry. Harrison was sent by President Truman to Europe in 1945 to assess the situation of Jewish DPs in the American Zone of Germany. Harrison famously reported back, “We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them, except that we do not exterminate them.” His report, published and widely read, underscores the importance of eyewitness accounting in the postwar period. Earl G. Harrison, *The Plight of the Displaced Jews in Europe: A Report to President Truman* (New York: Reprinted by United Jewish Appeal for Refugees, Overseas Needs and Palestine on behalf of Joint Distribution Committee, United Palestine Appeal, National Refugee Service, 1945).

taken from them, and in many cases where they have seen them murdered before their eyes.”¹⁰²

To support his insistence that Jewish survivors could not settle in Europe, he described the same uncertainty that Friedman evoked in his speeches, saying “I have been in Poland and I have been in Hungary and Slovakia, and I have seen the conditions under which the remnant of Jews in those countries live today.” Being there added to the legitimacy and potency of Schwartz’ testimony, although it’s unclear if the narratives of secondary witnesses had as much success in the political realm as they did for fundraising.¹⁰³

Nonetheless, Jewish organizations again sent secondary witnesses to Congress to argue for more lenient immigration quotas to the U.S. On June 1947, Herbert Lehman spoke on behalf of the National Community Relations Advisory Council (NCRAC) and the American Jewish Conference in support of the Stratton Bill HR 2910 before the Subcommittee on Immigration and Naturalization.¹⁰⁴ He relied heavily on his own experience in Europe as the General Director of UNRRA to make a strong claim about the need for suspended quota regulations on American Immigration policies. Lehman spoke for all Jewish organizations when he said, “I have seen these displaced persons and I have had first hand reports of their character and their activities. They know what freedom means, having been deprived of it. Their talents and loyalties would be as valuable to us today and in the future as those of the immigrants of the past. I know that they are first rate material for citizens of a democracy and for American citizenship. The victims of

¹⁰² Joseph J Schwartz, *Testimony before the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry* (New York: American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1946).

¹⁰³ For more about the politics of the Anglo-American commission in America, see, among others, Menahem Kaufman, *An Ambiguous Partnership: Non-Zionists and Zionists in America, 1939-1948*, (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1991), 204-241 and Zvi Ganin, *Truman, American Jewry, and Israel, 1945-1948*, (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1979), 77-97.

¹⁰⁴ NCRAC was made up of six constituent organizations: The American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, B’nai B’rith, the Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans of the United States, and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

totalitarianism make good defenders of democracy.”¹⁰⁵ The explicit connection of DPs to the fight against totalitarianism was a common argument for more lenient immigration quotas, as will be further explored in chapter five. Like Srole’s article in *Commentary*, Lehman’s testimony depicted survivors as potential American citizens, hardworking and forward thinking. Lehman relied on his authority as a witness to the DPs, offering a “first hand report” of the character and potential of all DPs.

Speaking specifically for the Jewish DPs, Lehman elaborated:

For these people, many of the countries of Europe are the graveyards of their loved ones. The six million Jewish dead who fell victims to Hitler’s merciless savagery has left scattered survivors only. If they wanted to go home, for the most part there are no homes left for them to return to. They are of a people which made the costliest, percentally [sic] the greatest, sacrifices in the war of civilization against the Nazi barbarism. They have a special and unique claim on the sympathy and the charity of mankind.¹⁰⁶

Like Srole, Lehman told the story of survivors through American values, but he also articulated a uniquely Jewish experience under Nazism and defined Jews as the victims most worthy of American aid. Additionally, he used his own experience and knowledge of the DPs to argue strongly for their potential as strong Americans, adding of the Jewish DPs, “That they are a vigorous element is proved by the fact that they have been able to survive the worst massacre and the most savage persecution in all history.”¹⁰⁷ Like Razovsky, Lehman tried to make sense of survival, arguing that the Jewish survivors would make good Americans because the strongest survived. This depiction of survival again reflects an early attempt to explain why some people

¹⁰⁵ Statement of Hon. Herbert H. Lehman, June 1947, Box 131, Folder 4, American Jewish Committee Papers (AJC), YIVO Archive.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

survived, but should be understood within the context of Lehman's attempt to represent survivors as ideal immigrants to influence immigration policy.¹⁰⁸

Curating survivor voices for American audiences

Jewish organizations did not cultivate the value of their secondary witnesses at the price of survivor witnesses and, in fact, Jewish survivors were sought after speakers in the immediate postwar period. Their eyewitness accounts were published in the American press and in countless memoirs.¹⁰⁹ In person, survivors were welcomed as honored guests at events of all sizes, from mass rallies in New York and Chicago¹¹⁰ to local chapter meetings around the country.¹¹¹ Nonetheless, American Jewish communal organizations working on behalf of

¹⁰⁸ The construction of survivor narratives specifically to engage with debates about American immigration will be explored further in chapter five.

¹⁰⁹ First hand survivor accounts were published in both English-speaking and Yiddish press. There was also a proliferation of memoirs in the aftermath of the war. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 188 and 4430, note 101.

¹¹⁰ A Mass Meeting was held at Madison Square Garden on June 11, 1946 with an estimated 18,000 people in attendance to hear Dr. Emil Sommerstein, president of the Jewish Central Committee of Poland. The meeting was sponsored by the American Jewish Committee, the Federation of Polish Jews, the Jewish Fraternal People's Order, the Labor Zionist Committee for Relief & Rehabilitation, the United Galician Jews, and the American Council of Warsaw Jews, a diverse group of organizations that reflected the reach of survivor witnessing in the New York area. At another mass rally the next day in Chicago, Sommerstein was quoted as saying, "Hitler, the enemy of mankind, the most terrible criminal in the whole of history, had for his purpose the extermination of the Jewish people. This goal he attained, to gruesome extent, on Polish soil in the death factories of Oswiecim, Treblinka, Maidenek, Belzec, Sobibor, Chelmno, Travaiki, where three million, two hundred thousand Polish Jews were murdered in addition to three million Jews of other countries of Europe." At the same time, Sommerstein's act of witnessing was also tied to American Jewish fundraising, saying the delegation came to their "brethren in the United States with an appeal for immediate help." Dr. Sommerstein was a member of the Polish Parliament before the war and a member of the first postwar Polish government. He survived the war in the Soviet Union, enduring imprisonment by the Soviet authorities and deportation to a gulag. He remained in the United States after this sponsored trip and died in the U.S. in 1957. Flyer for Mass Meeting, June 11, 1946, Box 23a, Folder 9, United States Territorial Collection (USTC), YIVO Archive, and "An End to the Darkness," *Chicago Sentinel* 143:11 (June 13, 1946), available at: <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/ref/collection/p16614coll14/id/1587>.

¹¹¹ On March 12, 1947, Etty Hassid of Salonica, a recipient of the National Council for Jewish Women scholarships for social work, "told her story" at the NCJW New York headquarters. An introductory pamphlet from NCJW instructed these women to become acquainted with local members "by making yourself available to attend major

survivors more often relied on secondary witness accounts than on those of survivors – even those who were living in America. The ability of secondary witnesses to translate the urgency of the postwar crisis into an American cultural milieu most successfully fulfilled the mission of Jewish organizations to mobilize American Jewish giving. So, Americans served as secondary witnesses even as survivors simultaneously talked about their experiences to American Jews.

At the same time, some Americans acted as mediators in a different capacity. Leo Schwarz and David Boder worked to collect and publish narratives constructed by survivors in America not for fundraising purposes, but to document the experiences of Jews during the Holocaust. Schwarz's collection, *The Root and the Bough: the Epic of an Enduring People* (1949) highlighted the optimism of survivors and accentuated the role of uprising and rebellion in the Jewish experience under Nazism.¹¹² Although he relies on survivor narratives, his role as an intermediary is pronounced as the book celebrates freedom and spiritual strength and mirrored the stories American Jews told about themselves.¹¹³ Meanwhile, David Boder collected audio interviews with over one hundred survivors of Nazism in 1946 and translated over eighty of the interviews for publication by 1956.¹¹⁴ Boder's first collection, *I did not interview the dead* (1949), was published the same year as Schwarz' collection but presented American audiences

meetings and speaking to the Section when they request it...you will no doubt be asked to speak to other civic, church, and synagogue groups." What these young women were expected to talk about is unclear: did they tell their stories? Or, did they offer their thanks for the support of NCJW? Press Release, March 12, 1947, and "Information for Scholarship Students," November 1948, Box 125, Folder: Overseas, Scholarships, 1946 – 1956, National Council for Jewish Women (NCJW) Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division (LOC).

¹¹² Leo W. Schwarz, *The Root and the Bough: The Epic of an Enduring People* (New York: Rinehart, 1949).

¹¹³ Diner makes this argument: "The story of the Jews who had eluded the Nazi Holocaust merged with the story American Jews told of themselves." Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 194.

¹¹⁴ For more about David Boder's project see Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

with starkly different stories.¹¹⁵ Boder's survivors stand in contrast to the narratives described thus far in the chapter in that they documented the war years in depth and were devastated by loss, loneliness, and displacement.

Leo Schwarz, born in New York in 1906, served in the U.S. Army during the war and remained in Europe after his discharge to work for the JDC. While there, he met thousands of survivors and collected written narratives from many. Upon returning to New York, Schwarz compiled 33 eyewitness accounts, including diary excerpts, memoirs, and postwar testimonies (some of which had been published before), in order to convey "the heroic resistance and survival of indomitable men, women and children in the face of a diabolical plan of extirpation."¹¹⁶ The narratives translated and edited by Schwarz were polished and structured to focus on the triumph of good over evil, conforming to the same literary structure as the examples of Jewish literature he had published previously in *The Jewish Caravan* and *A golden treasury of Jewish literature* and echo narratives presented by Razovsky or other secondary witnesses in their optimism and positivity.¹¹⁷

Unlike the secondary witnesses described above, Schwarz aimed to transport the stories of survivors to America in their own words, not through the lens of his own experience. But, his explicit intention to reveal the human dignity that survived and the spirit of resistance that grew

¹¹⁵ David P. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949).

¹¹⁶ Leo W. Schwarz, *The Root and the Bough: The Epic of an Enduring People* (New York: Rinehart, 1949), preface.

¹¹⁷ Leo W. Schwarz, *The Jewish Caravan: Great Stories of Twenty-Five Centuries*, (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, incorporated, 1935) and *A Golden Treasury of Jewish Literature*, (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, inc, 1937). Riv-Ellen Prell wrote of the postwar period, "The triumphant optimism not only for American Jews, but for a great swatch of the American people, marked the uniqueness of this era." Riv-Ellen Prell, "Triumph, Accommodation, and Resistance: American Jewish life from the end of World War II to the Six Day War," *The Columbia History of Jews and Judaism in America*, ed. Marc L. Raphael, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 114-141, 115.

despite war and horror shaped the way survivors accounted for their experiences.¹¹⁸ Schwarz edited the collected accounts to highlight resistance as a central response of Jews under Nazism, including chapters about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, resistance groups in the forests of Eastern Europe, and the uprising at Treblinka. By focusing on these events, Schwarz celebrated the human spirit rather than collecting stories that reflected the larger Jewish experience under Nazism. To further secure his central idea, Schwarz segmented the work into three parts: “The Fire’s Center,” “Flame of the Spirit,” and “The Undying Spark,” the titles of which convey the narrative of strength out of diversity that Schwarz hoped to document.

The first story in Schwarz’ collection ties together the broad ambitions of his project. The eyewitness account of Henry Lilienheim, a young man who survived the bombing of Warsaw, the Vilna Ghetto, deportation to Riga, transfer to a camp in Dautmergen (near the Swiss border), and another to Dachau. He was liberated near Munich and Schwarz met there him through his work with the JDC. Schwarz encouraged Lilienheim to write down his experiences and published an excerpt of a larger manuscript under the title “Mine Eyes Have Seen,” with the epigraph from Job 13:1 “Lo mine eye hath seen all this...”.¹¹⁹ This title confirmed the importance of eyewitnessing at the time and elevated Lilienheim’s personal testimony to biblical dimensions.

As the opening narrative, Lilienheim’s story introduced the themes highlighted throughout the collection: resistance, resilience, and hope. He detailed his time in the Vilna Ghetto, the liquidation, in which he lost track of his wife and family, and his deportation to

¹¹⁸ Schwarz, *The Root and the Bough*, xv.

¹¹⁹ Henry Lilienheim, “Mine Eyes Have Seen,” in *The Root and the Bough; the Epic of an Enduring People.*, ed. Leo W Schwarz (New York: Rinehart, 1949), 3-11.

Dachau. This account hints at the terrors of his wartime experience in which he endured forced labor in Riga and witnessed the hanging of Avraham Chwojnik, a resistance leader, who was hanged alongside three other resistance members. Yet, the story builds to a postwar crescendo: after the war, Lilienheim searched across Europe for his wife and when they were finally reunited, he wrote:

The pendulum of time swings rhythmically. My wife has borne a child. For weeks after, I wasn't sure how I felt about my little daughter. But when she smiled for the first time, I knew that I loved her and my heart was filled with sweetness. Looking at her, I seem to see my mother, my sister, my niece and a prolongation of my own life. She has come into this world because I survived, and belong once more to the fraternity of the living.¹²⁰

Lilienheim's story ends with this spirited optimism in a way that brings together the loss of the war with the possibilities for the postwar. While his story, and Schwarz' collection as a whole, offers an eyewitness account of the crimes under Nazism, this story also reveals how the experiences of survivors during the war were Americanized by Schwarz. Even though he sought to transport survivor eyewitness accounts to American audiences, he served as a heavy-handed mediator, crafting an optimistic narrative that transformed the depths of human despair into the promise of the human spirit.¹²¹

David Boder, on the other hand, sought to preserve the narratives of Displaced Persons in order to document their tragedy and trauma. His interviews, conducted in over ten languages with Jewish survivors and non-Jewish refugees, do not attest to a spirit of redemption and dignity; rather, they are marked by long breaks of weeping and incoherence. For Boder, the

¹²⁰ Henry Lilienheim, "Mine Eyes Have Seen," 12.

¹²¹ As Schwarz wrote of these stories: "They bear witness that hatred is human but its works are short-lived; that one can bear the yellow patch with pride, knowing that it is a badge of human dignity; that even in darkness, the heart and the mind contain the seed of all that is gracious and radiant." Schwarz, *The Root and the Bough*, xvi.

power of survivor eye witnessing was to create a record for future generations of the “impressions still alive in the memories of displaced persons referring to their suffering in concentration camps and during their subsequent wanderings” both “directly in their own language” and “in their own voices.”¹²² Survivors were not symbols of resistance, endurance, or spiritual strength. The voices that Boder translated for American audiences spoke of loss and torture and continued to dwell in their tragedy. Boder’s project is an important counter-example here because his effort to bring the stories from survivors to listeners were not supported by Jewish communal groups and struggled to find an audience in the late 1940s and 1950s.

Boder was born in 1886 to a Jewish family in Libau, Latvia (under Russian rule at the time). He was educated at Jewish schools in the Russian empire before leaving to study psychology in Leipzig, Germany under Wilhelm Wundt. There, Boder developed a strong commitment to experimental psychology that he would continue as a student at the Psychoneurological Institute in St. Petersburg, a professor at the University of Mexico, the director of psychological research at the Federal Mexican Prison system, and in Chicago, where he obtained an MA in psychology from the University of Chicago and a PhD from Northwestern. By the mid 1930s, Boder was employed at Lewis Institute (later the Illinois Institute of Technology (IIT)) and founder of the Psychology Museum. After a life of traversing borders and resettling around the globe, Boder became a U.S. citizen in 1932 and settled into his life in Chicago.¹²³

¹²² Memoranda, May 3, 1946, Box 1, Folder 3, David P. Boder Papers (DPBP), UCLA Special Collections.

¹²³ He eventually moved to Los Angeles for health reasons in 1952. He remained connected to his family and friends in Europe even after settling in America and was able to balance these different worlds. For a critical look at the Boder’s biography, see Rosen, *The wonder of their voices*, 25 - 43.

His nomadic life made him uniquely qualified to act as interviewer in postwar Europe; he spoke Yiddish, Russian, Latvian, German, Spanish, and English fluently and could also communicate in French, Polish, and Lithuanian. Committed to serving as the “Ernie Pyle” to Europe’s Displaced Persons, Boder worked to secure funds and visas that would enable him to travel openly in Europe and in August 1946 he travelled there alone with only a 50 pound wire recorder and 200 spools of wire.¹²⁴ The recently invented wire recorder allowed Boder to conduct oral interviews across Europe and he recorded over 100 individual accounts in two months, stopping in DP camps in France, Italy, Switzerland and Germany. He also recorded informal musical performances by groups of DPs, religious hymns by refugee Mennonites, and speeches from DP leaders.

Thanks to the Illinois Institute of Technology’s Voices of the Holocaust project, Boder’s original recordings have been digitized and made available for listening audiences.¹²⁵ But, Boder’s contemporary audience was never able to hear the interviews and could only access Boder’s vast collection through the interviews he translated and printed. In 1947, Boder published the first description of his project in the *Illinois Tech Engineer*, an IIT journal that did not command national attention. The title of the article suggests Boder’s scientific leanings and his early perceptions of the project: “The Displaced People of Europe: Preliminary notes on a psychological and anthropological study.”¹²⁶ It is not surprising, given the witness culture

¹²⁴ In nearly every project proposal Boder described the need for wire-recorded interviews with survivors saying, “These people are entitled to their own Ernie Pyle, and since that appears practically impossible, the exact recording of their tale seems the nearest and most feasible alternative.” Project Proposal, May 3, 1946, Box 1, Folder 3, DPBP/UCLA.

¹²⁵ Voices of the Holocaust is available online at: <http://voices.iit.edu/>.

¹²⁶ David Boder, “The Displaced People of Europe: Preliminary notes on a psychological and anthropological study,” *The Illinois Engineer Tech* (March 1947): 18-34.

described here, that Boder's "preliminary notes" told his own story.¹²⁷ In this initial article, Boder told the story of the Holocaust through the lens of his own attempt to lug the heavy wire recorder from interview to interview in the same way that Schwarz, Razovsky, and Friedman interpreted the stories of the DPs through their work with DPs in Europe. Yet, even in this first iteration, the narratives conveyed by Boder were wholly different than the stories of the other secondary witnesses considered thus far. Three specific differences are clear even in this 1947 essay: first, Boder evoked the experience of listening for his audience; second, the survivors he cited spoke directly about their experiences during the war; and third, Boder preserved the interaction between himself and his interviewee, calling attention to the postwar encounter that created the testimony.

Boder's commitment to preserving an audio quality to his interviews went well beyond the initial recording; his translation process preserved the conversational tone of the interviews by verbally translating from one wire to another and only then transcribing the interview.¹²⁸ This sentiment was also evident in his initial 1947 publication, when he wrote about his experience as a "hearer" and invited his readers to "listen to a fragment of spool 138."¹²⁹ Unlike the other

¹²⁷ The article detailed his initial interest in interviewing DPs, his trip to Europe, and the difficulties of carrying his recording equipment across Europe, as Boder wrote, "Considering that the recorder, a one-day supply of spools, and necessary accessories amounted to a load of about sixty pounds, my urgent dependence upon transportation by automobile becomes obvious." Boder, "The Displaced People of Europe: Preliminary notes on a psychological and anthropological study," 19.

¹²⁸ Boder described his translation process as follows: "The original stories were not transcribed on paper and then translated in the silence of the study. By the use of two Peirce Wire Recorders with stop and start controls I listened on one machine to the original, sentence by sentence, and then dictated the English translations on the other machine. Typists then transcribed the material from the translated recordings." Boder, *I did not Interview the Dead*, xiii.

¹²⁹ Boder, "The Displaced People of Europe: Preliminary notes on a psychological and anthropological study," 19-20. Alan Rosen highlights Boder's commitment to sound even as Boder converted the project to print, citing Boder's 1948 article, "Spool 169" as a reference to the auditory nature of the article content. Rosen, *Wonder in their Voices*, 121. Additionally, this attention to the recorded interviews and his desire to recreate an auditory experience for his audience evokes Dori Laub and Henry Greenspan's use of the term "listener." Dori Laub, "Bearing Witness or the

secondary witnesses, Boder did not find legitimacy in having “seen” but in having “heard.” Let me quote at length to elucidate the second and third differences between Boder and the other individuals examined earlier. This lengthy excerpt from Boder’s article reflects his own reliance on extended passages taken directly from the recorded spools to give a “literal translation” of survivor’s accounts to American audiences. Boder asked his reader to “listen” to Jürgen Bassfreund’s description of a “typical transport,” quoting:

‘The word trickled through that this transport was going to Dachau. We stepped forward, we were given a plate of soup, and, accompanied by S.S., we were sent to the station and were loaded into wagons. They were in part open, in part closed cars. We thought that the closed cars were better, but later it appeared we were worse off. When we were standing at the cars, the S.S. drove us into the cars, one hundred twenty people into each car. It was an impossibility.

Boder: ‘You were in a closed car?’

Jurgen: ‘Yes, in a closed car. The doors were shut. We had no food with us, and now we tried to sit down. When eighty people sat down the others had no place to stand, and there were many people who were very tired. It was not possible, otherwise one stood over the other. We stepped on other people’s fingers, and these people, of course, resisted and were striking the others, and so a panic began. It was so terrible that people went crazy during the trip, and while we were travelling there appeared among us the first man dead.

‘And we did not know where to put the dead – on the floor they were taking up space – because they had to lie stretched out. And then it occurred to us – we had a blanket with us so we wrapped up the dead man into this blanket, and there were two iron bars in the car, and so we tied him on above.’

Boder: ‘Like in a hammock?’

Vicissitudes of Listening,” 57 – 74. Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Recounting and Life History*, (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 1998).

Jurgen: ‘Yes, like in a hammock. But soon we understood that that wouldn’t do, because we had more and more dead, because of the heat in the car, and the bodies began to smell...’¹³⁰

Boder quotes significantly more from his interview with Bassfreund to give voice to the process of deportation. By using such long quotations, Boder replicated his own experience learning about what life was like for Jews during the war, allowing his readers to learn about the Holocaust from the words of the survivors.

Both the tone and structure of this passage are noticeably different than any of the stories presented or published by other secondary witnesses. Boder invited survivors to speak specifically about their wartime experiences and encouraged them to be as descriptive and detailed as possible. He interrupted his interviewees with questions about terminology and seemingly small details. Boder’s insistence that his interviewees talk about their memories of the war in such detail was unique at the time and his insistence on quoting them at length and publishing entire transcripts offered American audiences direct access to survivor testimonies not otherwise available.¹³¹ Additionally, Boder included his own role as the interviewer in the passage. This format was in following psychological and anthropological methodologies at the time, but was not common practice for other Americans transporting survivor narratives to America.¹³² Secondary witnesses like Friedman and Razovsky were not as explicit about their

¹³⁰ Boder, “The Displaced People of Europe: Preliminary notes on a psychological and anthropological study,” 20.

¹³¹ In using the term “testimony” here, I mean to define Boder’s interviews as distinct from other narratives at the time. Boder’s materials were designed to have historical, psychological, and scientific relevance and, as such, gave survivors a chance to “give testimony” – to speak directly and at length about their own experiences.

¹³² Boder discusses his choice of interview methodology according to practices of the time in an unpublished introduction to *The D.P. Story* (an early title for *I Did Not Interview the Dead*). Unpublished manuscript, 29, Box 3, DPBP/UCLA.

encounter with individual Jews in Europe. Only Boder declared his role so clearly in the construction of survivor stories, calling attention to the mediation of survivor narratives.¹³³

These specific elements of Boder's 1947 essay are also evident in his definitive publications, *I did not Interview the Dead* and *Tropical Autobiographies*, a self-published series that included over 80 of Boder's interview transcripts.¹³⁴ *I did not Interview the Dead* included eight interview transcripts – six of Jewish survivors and two of non-Jewish witnesses – and in so doing, represented Boder's larger project that recorded interviews with DPs from across Europe and documented a variety of experiences under Nazism. He aimed to keep the transcripts as true in tone and structure to the original interview as possible and to do so included his part of the interview and maintained the messy grammatical structure of the oral interview. The transcripts in *Tropical Autobiographies* similarly maintained the orality of the interviews and fulfilled Boder's ambition of making the words of survivors available for wide audiences. Despite these efforts, Boder never saw the voiced interviews find listeners and struggled to get an audience for the printed versions as well.

To make clear that the narratives Boder collected were less well received than the more Americanized versions, it is important to note that although the Jewish Publication Society (JPS) showed interest in publishing *I did not interview the dead*, it ultimately rejected Boder's submission because it did not fit their traditional mold. Alan Rosen has argued that the JPS favored stories in the postwar that focused on resistance and rescue (as better aligned with American values and interests) exemplified by Marie Syrkin's *Blessed is the Match*, which was published

¹³³ Rosen also calls attention to Boder's inclusion of his own questions in the interview transcripts and argues that it set him apart from other postwar interviewers. Rosen, *The Wonder in their Voices*, 4.

¹³⁴ David P. Boder, *Topical autobiographies of displaced people recorded verbatim in displaced persons camps with a psychological and anthropological analysis* (Chicago and Los Angeles: D.P. Boder, 1950 - 1957).

in 1948.¹³⁵ He contends that “Syrkin deliberately eschewed a direct confrontation with the destruction of European Jewry” while Boder recorded the tragedy from the eyewitnesses.¹³⁶ Instead, Boder’s manuscript was published by the University of Illinois Press and the more complete set of transcripts transcribed in *Topical Autobiographies* was self published. Boder worked privately to make the material available by funding the printing of the transcripts on microcard and writing letters to libraries around the country offering free copies of the work.¹³⁷

That his work was not published by a mainstream American Jewish press was only one more example of Boder’s lack of support from American Jewish organizations. In July 1945, he wrote to Samuel A. Goldsmith of the Jewish Charities of Chicago and declared, “I shall not hesitate to convert the investigation into what may be called a Jewish project, if under such circumstances either the Joint Distribution Committee or the American Jewish Congress should be willing to take this study under their wing.”¹³⁸ At the same time, Boder also wrote to a number of military offices stating that he was “willing to modify the project to suit any requirements of the Armed Forces or of the United States Government in general.”¹³⁹ As these opposing letters show, Boder was willing to shape his project according to funding possibilities and, had a Jewish organization recognized the potential value of Boder’s project, his interviews might have been different. He might have spent time exclusively with Jewish victims or asked

¹³⁵ Marie Syrkin, *Blessed is the Match: The Story of Jewish Resistance*, (London: Gollancz, 1948).

¹³⁶ For a detailed consideration of Boder’s interaction with JPS see Rosen, *The Wonder in their Voices*, 122-127.

¹³⁷ Series of letters, including one to Dr. Lawrence C. Powell, UCLA Librarian, December 19, 1955, Box 2, Folder “Copyright and Library of Congress,” DPBP/UCLA.

¹³⁸ Letter from Boder to Goldsmith, July 17, 1945 and Letter to B’nai B’rith, July 21, 1945, Box 1, Folder 1, DPBP/UCLA.

¹³⁹ Letter from Boder to Lieutenant Carl Devoe, USNR, Office of Strategic Services, July 17, 1945, Box 1, Folder 1, DPBP/UCLA.

more specifically religious questions. Instead, his trip to Europe was sponsored by his home institution, the Illinois Institute of Technology, and the Psychological Museum, of which Boder was the Executive Director, and his decade of translation work was sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health and the U.S. Public Health Service.¹⁴⁰

The lack of support from American Jewish organizations underscores the differences between Boder's orally recorded testimonies and the narratives constructed by secondary witnesses were at the time. Boder rejected the emotional appeals of people like Friedman and the heroic narratives of Schwarz, instead allowing survivors to speak explicitly about their experiences during the war. In this way, Boder preserved accounts of the Holocaust as the central event — more closely foreshadowing modern testimony collections. Nonetheless, his effort to provide American audiences with tragic and problematic narratives about the war struggled to find an audience.

Conclusion

Jewish communal organizations chose instead to employ people like Friedman, Razovsky, and Lania, who worked with survivors in Europe and transformed the stories of survivors into fundraising appeals that employed the ideals of America. The priorities of Jewish organizations, particularly the JDC, were to provide for the immediate physical needs of survivors — food, clothing, and medicine — and they were not focused on the historical value of survivor memories. The stories shaped to motivate giving for Jewish organizations reflected these needs and depicted the lives of surviving Jews in postwar Europe. Rabbi Freidman

¹⁴⁰ Boder, *Topical Autobiographies*, Addenda, 4 (3163), DPBP/UCLA.

documented the continued insecurity Jews faced in Poland and the pace of movement that defined their postwar escape from anti-Semitic violence, while Cecilia Razovsky conveyed the need survivors felt to be heard and articulated the importance of listening.

By employing, sponsoring, advertising, and publishing these kinds of narratives in the postwar period, American Jewish communal organizations fostered a witness culture that depended on secondary witnesses to transform stories about the Holocaust into stories fit for American audiences. Individuals who could speak to their own experiences in Europe translated the postwar challenges faced by survivors into fundraising and political appeals that directly addressed the needs of Jews abroad. These secondary witnesses, encouraged and enabled by the networks of American Jewish communal organizations, brought their passion, training, and commitment with them to Europe and brought their own stories of postwar Europe back home, interpreting the stories of survivors through their own experiences and adventures.

This chapter calls attention to the indirect way American Jews learned about the Holocaust – not from eyewitnesses to the event, but from eyewitnesses to the aftermath. The ability of American aid workers and Jewish leaders to translate the urgency and crisis of the postwar period into an American vernacular and according to American ideals made them essential mediators. This is true both of individuals like Friedman and Razovsky who brought their passionate advocacy on behalf of survivors back to America and of American Jewish leaders who quickly toured DP camps to assess the effect of American Jewish aid. The multiple forms of postwar witnessing complicated survivor representations for American audiences, but nonetheless, rendered these stories in American terms and through American ideals. In the immediate aftermath of the war, these witnesses gave voice to the immediate needs of the postwar period and to the precarious lives of survivors after liberation. As such, these narratives

reveal not only the way early survivor narratives were Americanized, but how the DP period became part of an early postwar understanding of the Holocaust.

2.

Heartstrings and Purse strings: American Jewish Fundraising for the Postwar Jewish world

At the end of the war, when hundreds of thousands of Jewish survivors were liberated from concentration camps and desperate for food, clothing, shelter, and the resources to find family members, the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) faced a crisis of unity that led to a break down in collective Jewish fundraising in America. The United Palestine Appeal (UPA) and the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) could not come to an agreement about allotment percentages and called off their joint campaign in February 1945.¹ Throughout the war, JDC had received 60% of all unified fundraising totals to support aid efforts in Europe and UPA leaders demanded an increased share in 1945. Rabbi James G. Heller and Dr. Abba Hillel Silver, national leaders of UPA, argued for a more equitable division of funds to support Jewish life in the Yishuv and emigration to Palestine, which they believed was the only way for Jews to create a secure future after the Holocaust. JDC leaders demanded at least their 1944 allotment in order to facilitate postwar aid for 150,000 of Jewish survivors. A similar stalemate had prevented a united appeal in 1941, but the stakes of international Jewish aid were more extreme in 1945 as the doors to Europe reopened. So, how was it possible that at the moment when American Jews were learning the full extent of the Holocaust and Jewish organizations were first able to reach the surviving

¹ “The Dissolution of the National United Jewish Appeal,” 1945, Nearprint JDC, American Jewish Archive (AJA), Box 2; “Historic U.P.A. Drive on for ’45: Statement by Dr. Heller,” *UPA Reports* (February 1945), Nearprint UJA/AJA.

Jews of Europe, these groups were embattled in internal debates about how to raise and spend money? And, how did these internal tensions shape public discourse about the Holocaust?

The dispute played out in public as UPA and JDC launched independent fundraising campaigns and, through those campaigns, articulated different priorities for postwar intervention abroad. The independent UPA drive for 1945 adopted the slogan, “They must never be homeless again” and thus declared displacement to be the primary challenge for Jewish survivors. Zionist leaders focused on long-term security as the best solution for Jewish survival and believed that funding illegal immigration to Palestine and agricultural training for survivors was of immediate concern. Heller detailed the connection between Jewish displacement, a Jewish state, and American Jewish fundraising, writing in the February 1945 *UPA Reports*, “Disillusionment and despair threaten the Jews who have survived the Nazi holocaust... unless American Jews take heroic measures to assure a permanent and secure future for the vast majority of them in the Jewish National Home in Palestine.”² Heller’s use of the term “holocaust” is an early example of how the term we now employ as a formal title indicated the Jewish experience under Nazism, but, in its lowercase form, was one of many possible terms at the time. Here, it justified the need for a Jewish state and American Jews were encouraged to act heroically to create a Jewish future in Palestine.

One month later, in the March 1945 *JDC Digest*, JDC National Chairman Jonah Wise offered a different understanding of survivors’ greatest needs. He wrote, “German hate has decimated Europe’s Jews, but today from the ruins of devastated towns and villages, wan skeleton-like wraiths are emerging. Weakened by their privations and destitute of all possessions,

² “Historic U.P.A. Drive on for ’45: Statement by Dr. Heller,” *UPA Reports* (February 1945), 1, Nearprint UJA/AJA.

they stand helpless. They need food, clothing, medicines.”³ Rather than focus on the long-term possibilities for Jewish security, Wise identified the material needs of survivors as the most immediate priority. Like Heller, Wise championed American Jews as the only possible solution to the problem: “We American Jews – the only large body of Jews who have not suffered physically the source of German bestiality – we are the one hope of these destitute unfortunates.” Wise employed more poetic language — “German bestiality” — to define the experience of Jews under Nazism, but articulated the physical state of survivors as a means of motivating American giving. For Wise and the JDC, American intervention was best applied to the short-term physical needs of the “wraith”-like, skeletal survivors.

In June 1945, the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds (CJFWF), a national body representing local Jewish communities and federated welfare appeals, applied sufficient pressure to reconstitute the UJA and a truncated campaign called for an \$80,000,000 goal, which would be distributed at 57% to JDC and 43% to UPA.⁴ The reconciliation between JDC and UPA was not facilitated by a mediation of differences, but by the demand of their donors who sought unity in fundraising for Jewish causes. As Yehuda Bauer explained, “Jews in the

³ “Statement by Jonah Wise,” *JDC Digest*, March 1945 (4:1), 1, YIVO Library.

⁴ The June agreement also yielded one fundraising concession to each side: the Jewish National Fund (a constituent group of UPA) was allowed to conduct independent collections up to \$1.5 million and JDC could collect earmarked funds for *landsmenschaften* up to \$800,000. *UPA Reports* (June 1945), Nearprint UPA/AJA. JNF “traditional” collections referred to fundraising efforts conducted directly by the Jewish National Fund, which existed outside the UJA appeal. JDC announced that their main concern with “traditional” collecting by JNF was the \$200,000 fundraising apparatus that conducted this outside campaign. “The Dissolution of the National United Jewish Appeal,” 1945, 6, Box 2, Nearprint JDC/AJA. *Landsmanschaftn* were groups formed by Jewish immigrants from the same villages, towns, and cities in Central and Eastern Europe. They formed in the late 1800s and served as social organizations, providing religious and cultural services for members through the 19th Century. Throughout the war and postwar period, they raised money to be sent back directly to the towns which they represented. *Landsmanschaftn* activities were administered through the JDC. For more, about *landsmanschaften*, see Hannah Kliger, ed. *Jewish Hometown Associations and Family Circles in New York* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1992) and Daniel Soyer, *Jewish Immigrant Associations and American Identity in New York, 1880 – 1939* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).

organized communities did not want to have dozens of agencies knocking at their doors.”⁵

Nonetheless, the tension that undermined the 1945 campaign persisted throughout the postwar period. Organizations within the UJA umbrella, including UPA and JDC as well as the National Refugee Service (later the United Service for New Americans) and ORT, in addition to those outside this fundraising system, like Hadassah and Vaad Hatzala, determined opposing priorities for postwar Jewish aid that endorsed a range of possible Jewish futures. As the public rhetoric in 1945 suggests, these political differences generated different representations of survivors and multiplied the kinds of stories told about Jewish life in Europe during and after the war. Yet, each of these different narratives framed American Jews as heroes, responsible for saving Jews lives around the world and preserving a Jewish future.

This chapter examines the postwar fundraising efforts of these organizations, relying heavily on the fundraising materials of UJA and Hadassah to identify how different political visions shaped early survivor narratives for American Jewish audiences while also imagining a new role for American Jewry as the borders of the Jewish world shifted. Through the fundraising efforts of American Jewish communal organizations, representations of survivors and their experiences were transformed into emotional appeals that mobilized a politically, socially, and culturally diverse American Jewry and provided American Jews with a meaningful opportunity for action. In this way, fundraising became an important response to the Holocaust and a significant site of intersecting narratives: those of Holocaust survivors and of American Jews. The first half of this chapter will detail how Jewish fundraising exploded in the postwar period

⁵ Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the ashes: the impact of American Jews on post-holocaust European Jewry* (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989), xvii.

following the 1945 dispute at UJA and consider how the diversity of American Jewish communal interests crafted a multiplicity of survivor representations.

In the second half of the chapter, I trace the fundraising narratives of UJA for the years between 1946 and 1953 to establish that survivor narratives changed according to the crises of the postwar world. As the need for funds in Europe, Israel, and beyond grew, survivor narratives were repositioned, defining the victims of Nazism as refugees, pioneers, and new Americans. Throughout the chapter, I introduce examples from UJA and other organizations that highlight the use of visual media to project these diverse identities and employ symbols of the Holocaust experience, like barbed wire and number tattoos, as powerful emblems of Jewish suffering. These symbols remained central to the success of postwar Jewish fundraising campaigns, even as the crises shifted away from Europe to new zones of Jewish despair. At the same time that organizations relied on multiple survivor narratives to convey the urgency and breadth of postwar philanthropy, they positioned American Jews as saviors so that the story of Jewish need abroad was answered by American Jewish giving. Tracing the narrative and visual themes of postwar philanthropy reveals how stories about Holocaust survivors reciprocally constructed stories about American Jews.

*The “ridiculous” \$100,000,000 1946 Campaign*⁶

The truncated 1945 UJA campaign raised just over half of its goal, collecting only \$45,000,000 between June and December 1945. Yet, this disappointment did not stop the leaders

⁶ Henry Montor, Executive Vice-Chairman of UJA is quoted as remembering the 1946 goal being “ridiculous” in Marc Lee Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal, 1939-1982* (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1982), 21.

of UJA from boldly establishing postwar goals that better reflected the need abroad. In December 1945, UJA leaders declared a \$100,000,000 goal for the “Year of Survival” campaign, an unheard of amount for a private organization at the time. By December, American Jewish leaders knew that Nazi crimes had killed nearly six million Jews in Europe and, after the September publication of the Harrison Report, they also knew that Europe’s surviving Jews were not being treated well in DP Europe.⁷ As such, American Jewish leaders recognized their responsibility in responding to the needs of Jewish survivors and voted unanimously for the \$100 million goal, even if they thought the goal unattainable.⁸ Two important contextual markers reveal the audacity of this goal for UJA: first, UJA had raised about \$100,000,000 throughout the entire war (1939 – 1945); and second, the Red Cross, a nationally supported organization with a membership of more than 18,000,000 in the 1940s, also set a goal of raising \$100,000,000 in 1946.⁹

The Red Cross was concerned about decreasing popular interest in international philanthropy at the end of the war and waged a campaign around the slogan “Your Red Cross Must Carry On.” Despite their concern that Americans were no longer interested in funding humanitarian aid abroad, the campaign amounted to \$118,000,000, more than their goal, but

⁷ The Harrison Report was the result of Earl Harrison’s tour of the DP camps of Europe. At the request of President Truman, Harrison had investigated the treatment of Jewish DPs by the American military and found that “We appear to be treating the Jews as the Nazis treated them except that we do not exterminate them.” Earl G. Harrison, *The Plight of the Displaced Jews in Europe: A Report to President Truman* (New York: Reprinted by United Jewish Appeal for Refugees, Overseas Needs and Palestine on behalf of Joint Distribution Committee, United Palestine Appeal, National Refugee Service, 1945).

⁸ For more about the December 1945 meeting and debate about the \$100 million goal, see Abraham J. Karp, *To Give Life: The UJA in the Shaping of the American Jewish Community*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1981), 87-89.

⁹ Raphael cites the figure of \$124 million as the amount *pledged* between 1939 – 1945. Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, Table 4:1, 136. Red Cross numbers: Foster R. Dulles, *The American Red Cross: A History*, (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 509.

significantly less than wartime donations.¹⁰ In the same year, the UJA ramped *up* its expectations and also exceeded its goal, raising \$103,000,000 in 1946.¹¹ In fact, UJA continued to increase their fundraising goals and totals throughout the postwar period, collecting \$750,000,000 between 1945 and December 1952. This increase marked a significant departure from the war time years and established the pace, tone and demands of postwar Jewish philanthropy.¹²

For Jewish organizations outside the UJA umbrella, postwar fundraising totals also reached new levels, reflecting an increase in both individual gifts as well as participation. New communities contributed to local welfare drives, individuals who had never given before became active, and non-Jews also participated in Jewish appeals.¹³ As indicated by the reduction of Red Cross donations, the increase in Jewish fundraising ran counter to the deflation of humanitarian philanthropy across America and the success of Jewish appeals in the postwar period was recognized as a “bright spot” in the field of postwar philanthropy.¹⁴ In 1960, historian Robert Bremner acknowledged that American Jews, “numbering less than five million” raised a stunning amount of money that facilitated “European Jews out of Displaced Persons Camps,

¹⁰ Dulles, *The American Red Cross*, 508-509.

¹¹ The figure of \$103,000,000 comes from Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, Table 4:1, 136. The total collection for 1946 has also been cited as \$105,000,000 in Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*. While the goal amounts are made public in nearly every press release, appeal letter, and publicity document, the total collected amounts are not as public. The figures remain unspecific throughout this period.

¹² “Report from Dr. Schwartz,” *UJA Reports*, December 18, 1952, vol. 7, 17, Box 39, HAFP/AJA.

¹³ UJA also appealed to non-Jews as individuals and through institutions. They celebrated success outside Jewish circles. For example, a 1947 UJA campaign brochure features a two page spread of quotes from famous Jews and non-Jews including President Truman, General Eisenhower, Eleanor Roosevelt, and Jan Masaryk. “They Say . . .,” 1947 Brochure, Box 23, Folder 1, HAFP/AJA. Hadassah affiliated with non-Jewish organizations, including Children to Palestine, run by Martha Sharp. Series of letters and memos from and about Martha Sharp, , Box 18, Folder 119, YAP/Hadassah. Additionally, Raphael argues that “whenever possible” non-sectarian language was used to express the appeals of UJA even during the war years to “win the enthusiastic support of non-Jewish Americans.” Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, 16.

¹⁴ Harold J. Seymour, *Design for giving; the story of the National War Fund, inc., 1943-1947* (New York, Harper, 1947) 123.

assisted Jewish emigration and resettlement, and helped the new state of Israel in its fight for life.”¹⁵ How can we understand the surge of Jewish fundraising in the aftermath of the war that supported these distinct projects? What motivated American giving in the wake of the Holocaust when American philanthropy at large was turning away from war related charities?

Bauer lists several reasons to explain the postwar success of American Jewish fundraising, including better, “more accurate, and frightening” information, developed fundraising techniques, and “the general war atmosphere in which people were expected to make sacrifices.” Yet, he stresses the fact that the increase in Jewish philanthropy after the war reveals a deep sense of guilt among American Jews, arguing that Jews gave in greater amounts after realizing they should have done more during the war. He writes, “Suddenly, American Jewry found it had the money which, had it been found in 1936-1942 might have saved many, many lives.”¹⁶ In his history of the UJA, Marc Lee Raphael alternatively suggests that the fundraising efforts during the war helped to build “campaign organizations” that made possible the “unprecedented campaign of 1946” as well as the increased giving seen throughout the postwar years.¹⁷ Raphael’s assessment that the war years were productive building years supports UJA and JDC reports that expose the pride of American Jewish communal leaders in their fundraising throughout the war. The reports detail JDC efforts to use any available channel to send help to Europe, sending money and material aid through Switzerland and the Soviet Union. UJA funds also supported Jews fleeing Nazi Europe through Spain and Portugal and enabled domestic political pressure for additional immigration.

¹⁵ Robert H. Bremner, *American Philanthropy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960) 172-173.

¹⁶ Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xviii. Shapiro also points to guilt to explain the increased amounts of giving in the postwar period. Shapiro, *Time for Healing*, 63.

¹⁷ Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, 18.

This is not to say that individual Jews across America did not feel a sense of guilt after the war or that their emotional response was not tinged with a sense of what could have been, but, the large-scale increase in Jewish giving after the war cannot be seen as a response to guilt. Rather, motivations for postwar giving reflect a combination of impulses, including a renewed connection with European Jewry, support for a Jewish homeland, and the recognition of new responsibilities that demanded American Jews act as the saviors of world Jewry.¹⁸ The emotional resonance of survivor narratives must also be seen as an essential component. Recognizing that images and stories about Holocaust survivors were central to all Jewish postwar fundraising efforts offers a more complex understanding of postwar Jewish giving and that these stories were shaped to reflect diverse political visions for a Jewish future allowed American Jews opportunities to give, as Jews, despite political allegiances.

The fundraising potential of emotionally provocative stories was understood at the time. As Scott Cutlip bluntly stated in 1965, American fundraising in the postwar period depended upon "common cheap exploitation of human emotion." He elaborated: "Tugs at the heartstrings were then, are now, and perhaps always will be an almost surefire method of getting people to open their purse strings."¹⁹ Even before the war, American Jewish donors recognized the cynical use of emotional narratives as a powerful fundraising tool. A respondent to Koppel Pinson's thoughtful and scientific description of German Jews in 1936, printed in the *Menorah Journal*, wrote, "So much of what is nowadays written about the Jews in Germany is intended to wring

¹⁸ Bauer also calls attention to the importance of *building* a sense of identification between American and European Jews. We cannot take for granted that American Jews acted to help their brethren across the ocean. Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xxi.

¹⁹ Scott M. Cutlip, *Fundraising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press: 1965), 20.

our hearts and touch our purse-strings.”²⁰ Clearly, the relationship between stories of struggle and “purse-strings” was well established and the unprecedented fundraising achievements of the American Jewish community should be seen in light of the survivor narratives employed to motivate new levels of giving. However, the transmission of such stories was not only “common cheap exploitation.” These narratives transmitted early stories about the Holocaust to American families, sending brochures, letters, and other materials to a majority of American Jewish homes and connecting American Jewry to the struggles of Jews around the world.

The multiplicity of postwar survivor identities

Jewish survival, long a theme in communal work of American Jews, took on new relevance in the aftermath of the war and opposing visions for how to secure Jewish survival prompted a range of humanitarian responses. As Jewish organizations raised funds in response to the needs of European Jews, they defined priorities for American Jewish intervention around the world that depicted a multiplicity of survivor representations. The 1945 campaign revealed some of the fault lines in American Jewish politics as Zionist leaders clashed with non-Zionists and the battle for funds played out between supporting a Jewish state in Palestine and rehabilitating Jewish life in Europe. However, other efforts also demanded the attention and funds of American Jews. Organizations such as the United Service for New Americans (USNA) and Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) worked to aid Jewish immigrants in America. These groups helped New Americans find jobs, learn English, and become citizens. Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds across the country also raised money for local concerns, like Jewish schools,

²⁰ Letter signed by R. Cohen, October 27, 1936 from 854 West 181 Street, Box 1, Folder: Lectures, letters read, Koppel Pinson Collection, New York Public Library.

hospitals, social welfare, and synagogues. These projects reflect the diversity of Jewish philanthropic work that was both ideologically and socially differentiated. Nonetheless, American Jewish organizations, and UJA in particular, projected a sense of unity that bolstered domestic political efforts and more robust national fundraising.²¹

The 1948 Los Angeles United Jewish Welfare Board Yearbook demonstrates how survivor representations were crafted to bolster this public display of unity in the immediate aftermath of the war. The Yearbook cover featured an image of a strong young man looking out towards the future and wearing a light-colored uniform with a Jewish star. His left hand was grasped as a display of strength, while his right hand was wrapped around the shoulder of a young girl wearing a dark dress and clutching a young boy who is cloaked in a blanket (Figure 1). The caption declares, “They must live in FREEDOM!”²² The image constructed a visual symbol of immigration to the Jewish state—the strong, lightly clothed young Jewish soldier in Palestine acted as protector for the young children, draped in dark colors, who survived Nazi persecution. This scene of “freedom,” attainable only through the generosity of American donors, also repurposed the symbol of the Jewish star – no longer a mark of shame in Nazi Europe, but a symbol of strength in Palestine.

²¹ A perception of unity has been central to the history of American Jewish philanthropy. See Philip Bernstein, *To dwell in unity: the Jewish federation movement in America since 1960*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1983) and Abraham J. Karp, *To give life: the UJA in the shaping of the American Jewish community*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1981). Additionally, Kerri Steinberg argues that the wartime emergence of UJA projected a sense of unity for Jewish people defined by the “We are One” campaign. Kerri P Steinberg, “Photography, Philanthropy, and the Politics of American Jewish Identity” (Ph.D., UCLA, 1998), 16-17.

²² Los Angeles United Jewish Welfare Fund, *1948 Year Book*, (Los Angeles Jewish Community Council, 1948), cover.



Figure 1: The cover of the 1948 Los Angeles Jewish Community yearbook juxtaposes the strength and vigor of an Israel pioneer with the despair of Jewish survivors.

Cover of the *1948 Year Book* from the Los Angeles Jewish Community Council.

Inside, the Yearbook made a more local appeal, assuring donors that all of their funds would not be sent abroad: “Here in America, your Welfare Fund dollars support the fight against anti-Semitism and meet the growing expenses of your Los Angeles Jewish community. Your Welfare Fund contribution assures the increasing spread of Jewish education, helps in the establishment and maintenance of Jewish centers, supports hospitals and welfare institutions.”²³ This messaging, both visual and textual, appealed to donors interested in Zionist concerns, aid to Europe’s surviving Jews, and Jewish education at home, all of which were supported through the united fundraising effort of local welfare campaigns and nationally through UJA. The assertion

²³ Los Angeles United Jewish Welfare Fund, *1948 Year Book*, (Los Angeles Jewish Community Council, 1948), 167.

of unity allowed donors with different political affiliations to combine forces, facilitating greater financial gain by all affiliated organizations.

UJA leaders recognized the value of such joint campaigns. Henry Montor, Executive Vice-Chairman of UJA from 1946 – 1950, “understood the potential rewards in dollars for Israel” if Zionist efforts were aligned with non-Zionist appeals. In his study of UJA, Marc Lee Raphael suggests that for Montor, the rhetoric of unity increased the American Jewish capacity to financially support Israel because Jews across the country were more likely to give to a universal appeal than to a Zionist specific one.²⁴ This was not necessarily a reflection of individual affiliations, but of political differences between local and national leaders. Montor believed that Jews across the country and local Jewish leaders were more focused on the immediate needs of Jews in Europe and Jewish life at home than on the future of a Jewish state. National leaders led the Zionist efforts and were able to gain more support through UJA than regionally allotted dispensations.

So, the combined fundraising system ensured that all aspects of postwar philanthropic work would be financially viable by allowing donors to respond to one unified appeal. Yet, this effort did not diminish the differences between organizational ambitions. On the contrary, the expression of unity preserved multiple representations of survivors by depicting survivors in each geographic space of postwar Jewish aid: Europe, Israel, and America. As a result, the fundraising materials of UJA both affirm and complicate Kerri Steinberg’s assertion that images of Jewish survivors from the immediate postwar period “reverberate today as striking, yet

²⁴ Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, 37.

stereotypical images of powerlessness.”²⁵ In her study of postwar American Jewish philanthropic images, Steinberg picks up David Biale’s assertion that “the Holocaust has come to represent the powerlessness of the Diaspora” by arguing that the images of the Holocaust in postwar American Jewish fundraising materials “constitute familiar icons of Jewish persecution.”²⁶ In fact, many fundraising materials from the late 1940s and early 1950s did feature visual images of survivors as destitute, hungry, and skeletal (as the examples above demonstrate), suggesting the trope of powerlessness. However, the stories crafted for American Jewish fundraising appeals in the immediate postwar period told *multiple* stories that also characterized survivors as resilient and capable. How else could these organizations have demanded that Jewish survivors would make successful future citizens?

As such, Jewish survivors were cast as DPs, refugees, immigrants, victims, and New Americans to support stories about JDC work in the DP camps of Europe, the need for infrastructure in Palestine, or immigration to America. These distinct identities also reflected the status of survivors as persecuted victims of Nazism, stateless individuals, or potential emigrants. Other terms, such as “remnant” or “surviving remnant,” evoked the *Sh’erit H’apletah* (the surviving remnant), the community identity employed by survivors themselves.²⁷ These terms

²⁵ Steinberg, “Photography, Philanthropy, and the Politics of American Jewish identity,” 2.

²⁶ David Biale, “Power and Powerlessness in Jewish History: Two Views Over Two Decades” *Perush* 1 (October 12, 2008), <http://perush.cjs.ucla.edu/index.php/volume-1-2009-working-papers-series-jewish-politics-and-political-behavior-editors-introduction/david-biale-power-and-powerlessness-in-jewish-history-two-views-over-two-decades>. For more see, David Biale, *Power & powerlessness in Jewish history*, (New York: Schocken Books, 1986), particularly page 201.

²⁷ For more about the development and use of the term *Sh’erit H’apletah* see Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998), Atina Grossman, *Jews, Germans and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), Hagit Lavsky, *New Beginnings: Holocaust Survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British Zone in Germany, 1945-1950* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), and Zeev Mankowitz, *Life Between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

better reflected a sense of loss and displacement under Nazism, whereas terms like “New Americans” or “refugees,” conveyed a postwar position.

A 1948 campaign booklet sent to potential donors from the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York exemplifies the use of multiple survivor identities to appeal to Jews across the political spectrum and, in so doing, allowed UJA to reconcile its diverse campaign goals. The booklet outlined “four tasks” that demanded support from American Jews: “the needs in Palestine”; “the needs in Europe”; “the needs of those who wish to enter the United States within quota limits” and “our own needs here in America.”²⁸ To render these needs in human terms, the booklet depicted “the Pioneer” “the Survivor” and “the Newcomer” each of whom was dependent on American aid. In this context, “the Survivor” was defined as “those remaining in Europe, and those who have fled to the ends of the earth...to escape persecution” and depicted by a picture of young people slumped together (Figure 2).²⁹ One young girl looks directly at the camera, squinting her eyes against the sun, while holding another child who is asleep in her lap; in the background, another small child nods his heads in sleep. Such representations of children recall the idea of Jewish powerlessness and were frequently used to appeal to the heartstrings of American Jewish donors.³⁰

²⁸ “Memorandum from the 1948 Campaign Chairman, United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York,” (attached to contract for 1948 Campaign of United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York), Box 206, Folder 2, United States Territorial Collection (USTC), YIVO Archive.

²⁹ “4 Tasks, 1 Answer”, pamphlet, Box 206, Folder 2, USTC/YIVO.

³⁰ The over-representation of children in the postwar period will be discussed in length in chapter four. For more about how children became symbols of postwar struggles and Jewish persecution in this period, see Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe's Families After World War II*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011) and Mark M. Anderson, “The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust,” *Jewish Social Studies* 14:1 (Fall 2007) 1- 22. For more about children as symbols of renewal in postwar Europe see also Daniella Doron, “In the best interest of the child: Family, youth, and identity among postwar French Jews, 1944-1954 (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2009).



Figure 2: “The Survivor”

“4 Tasks, 1 Answer,” pamphlet, Box 206, Folder 2, USTC/YIVO. Courtesy of YIVO.



Figure 3: “The Pioneer”

“4 Tasks, 1 Answer,” pamphlet, Box 206, Folder 2, USTC/YIVO. Courtesy of YIVO.

As the booklet indicates, “the Survivor” was a recognizable figure in postwar aid efforts, one that American Jews were told was hanging between “survival and extinction.” At the same time, “The Newcomers,” those “seeking haven in our own land,” were also survivors. They were described as “European Jewish men, women, and children...from the graveyard lands of the old world” and explicitly identified as the “thousands of survivors of Nazi persecution.” These Newcomers needed aid to adapt to American life and integrate into society, work performed by USNA. The needs in Palestine were also associated with Jewish survivors as “the immigration...of 75,000 European Jewish D.P.s” demanded attention from the UPA.³¹ However, “The Pioneer” represented in the booklet was not explicitly identified as a survivor. The image of a strong, smiling young woman hoisting up a small baby corresponded to the idea of “the

³¹ The brochure further identified the DPs as 24,000 orphaned children whose “care and training are most costly.” “4 Tasks, 1 Answer,” pamphlet, Box 206, Folder 2, USTC/YIVO.

Pioneer” as a laborer on the land and with “their labor” and “our money” UPA could “build the homeland” (Figure 3). These multiple identities reflected the diversity of survivor experiences in the postwar period: some survivors were trapped in Europe, others were able to emigrate to Palestine, and some to the United States. Yet, the brochure reveals more than a range of experiences, it conveys a diversity of representation in which Jews struggling in postwar Europe were still seen as Displaced Persons or Survivors, those who made their way to Israel were Pioneers, and those in America were Newcomers or New Americans.

That UJA could present each of these distinct survivor identities within one appeal underscores the value of their unified approach. Individual donors and local welfare groups could support different postwar objectives and Jewish leaders could maintain urgency around fundraising by blending the desperation of victimhood with hope and optimism. However, the balance between victimhood and citizenship was a precarious rhetorical act: how could Jewish survivors be both desperately in need and yet valuable potential citizens? The 1948 booklet offers a way to parse these two connected and yet distinct representations. The “Survivors” in the brochure were helpless and suffering, while the “Pioneer” was active. The “Newcomer” was brave and on the verge of becoming “well-adjusted and productive members of the American community.”³² In this way, surviving Jews took on different roles based on geographic context and UJA advocated for their work in Europe, Palestine, and America. These diverse representations simultaneously reflected the postwar experiences of survivors, justified continued aid through UJA, and offered immigration as an answer to the DP crisis because the needy and depleted victims could be transformed into Pioneers in Palestine and Newcomers in America

³² Ibid.

Outreach and publicity materials from ORT, the Organization for Rehabilitation through Training (also funded by UJA starting in 1947), further complicated the depiction of Jews as victims, presenting Jews as productive future citizens through images of work and job training.³³ The appeals are similar to those of USNA and UPA, which projected emigration as a solution to the DP crisis, but offered yet another priority for postwar intervention. ORT opened schools across Europe after the war that allowed DPs to develop new skills they could take with them to their new homes. ORT was not ideological about where Jews should emigrate; rather, the organization focused on enabling a better future for survivors and asked donors who “saved them from dying” to “train them for living.”³⁴ The images in such appeals show well dressed men and women sitting at sewing machines and standing with large industrial instruments; these Jews were not helpless or distraught, but focused and productive.

Through fundraising materials of this kind, organizations like ORT not only solicited money from American Jewish donors, but waged an important publicity campaign in support of DP immigration. Jeffrey Shandler has argued that part of the “extensive public relations effort made during the early postwar years by a variety of agencies” sought to “promote the acceptance of DPs as citizens.”³⁵ While UJA materials, and USNA efforts in particular, defined survivors as “Newcomers” and “New Americans,” ORT materials employed a more nuanced strategy by

³³ ORT was founded in 1880 to train European Jews in agricultural and industrial skills in preparation for emigration. Following the war, ORT opened over 7000 schools in DP camps and across Europe to retrain Jewish survivors for work in their future homes. ORT materials maintain that over 50,000 survivors were trained by ORT schools and programs. For more about ORT, see Sarah Kavanaugh, *ORT, the Second World War and the rehabilitation of Holocaust survivors*, (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

³⁴ ORT Brochure, “You saved them from dying, now train them for living,” Box 50, ORT/YIVO.

³⁵ Jeffrey Shandler recognizes the efforts of UJA and other organizations to make DPs seem like valuable potential citizens and argues that there was an “extensive public relations effort made during the early postwar years by a variety of agencies to promote the acceptance of DPs as citizens.” Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches: Televising the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 37.

highlighting the spiritual strength and technical skills of Jewish survivors. A February 1948 exhibit in New York, sponsored by ORT, showcased the handiwork of Jews in Europe and allowed the material production of ORT students to speak for the survivors.³⁶ The exhibit brochure stated, “Every single exhibition article has been produced by the hands of former concentration camp inmates and persecutees. Though they are silent, their work speaks for them, and says: "Am Jisroel chai" - the Jewish people live! / In this work the Jewish people show that they can create from dead matter valuable contributions for the world.”³⁷ This message directly challenged the notion at the time (and thereafter) that survivors were weakened by or powerless because of their wartime experiences. In fact, the ORT brochure declared, “Through the darkness to a brighter future,” suggesting that a “brighter future” could be built from the Holocaust and Jews could emerge strong from years of persecution.³⁸

Pursuit of a secure Jewish future motivated organizations across the political spectrum after the war and resulted in a multiplicity of survivor representations that each conveyed the fundraising urgency of Jewish organizations. In particular, the realities of postwar immigration as the answer to DP suffering necessitated a dual identity for survivors — one that reflected their current status as refugees and one that projected their future capacity to be citizens. And yet, this diversity was constructed within a system that enabled American Jews to give without differentiating their political affiliations. Survivor narratives were thus molded to fit multiple

³⁶ This exhibit is also featured in Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 162-163.

³⁷ Exhibit Brochure, Folder 66, ORT/YIVO.

³⁸ ORT also collected survivor testimonies to use in their publicity materials. Hand written accounts from young survivors are preserved in the YIVO collection and echo the same narrative of “through the darkness to a brighter future.” The narrative of Rose Zlota is particularly illuminating. She was born in Poland in 1930 and in September 1942, was sent from the ghetto to a concentration camp with her family. Soon, her brother died of starvation and her father was killed at Mathausen. Rose was liberated with her mother in 1945 and wrote, “Then we went to Ebelsburg where I joined ORT’s dressmaking class. I trust I shall manage well to learn this trade and so accomplish something in my life.” Life story by Rose Zlota, February 23, 1948, translation from Polish, Folder 66, ORT/YIVO.

frames that reflected American Jewish interests more than the survivors' and the tension between unity and diversity generated a sense of survival, sacrifice, and destiny that was reshaped annually for each new fundraising campaign.

Survival and sacrifice in united Jewish fundraising (1946 – 1947)

The historic 1946 UJA campaign adopted the slogan, “Year of Survival” and thus articulated the responsibility of American Jews to save the lives of the remaining European Jews. As the Speaker’s Manual for the campaign instructed, “Any failure on our part to provide the help needed will condemn the survivors to the fate of the 6,000,000 who perished in the death camps and gas chambers.”³⁹ In this way, American Jewish leaders inserted themselves into the story of Jewish survival; without the humanitarian intervention of American Jews, European Jews would again face certain death. To further aid volunteers in drawing connections between American Jewish fundraising and Jewish survival, the manual scripted the following key phrases: “The remnants have been saved from extermination. They have not yet been saved from hunger, disease, homelessness and suffering... The \$100,000,000 UJA Campaign is our strongest weapon in the battle for survival.” This language reflected the efforts of America at large to wage a battle for postwar peace and called attention to the liminality of the postwar moment, when the life or death immediacy of the wartime persisted. Although Jews had been liberated from concentration camps, the years between liberation and resettlement were defined by continued upheaval, perpetual displacement, and uncertainty for most survivors. The fear and violence of the war continued in some parts of Europe and Jews across the continent struggled to

³⁹ 1946 UJA Speaker’s Manual, Box 10, Nearprint UJA/AJA.

secure housing, food and clothing. As American Jews took up the challenge of alleviating these post-liberation challenges, they constructed stories that highlighted Jewish anxieties in the postwar more so than wartime tragedies and defined the central role American Jews would play as the postwar leaders of world Jewry.

Towards this end, UJA leaders communicated the need for “unprecedented levels” of giving, asking Jews and non-Jews across the country to give “one-time gifts” through local and national campaigns. They activated networks created during the war by setting regional quotas that doubled or tripled previous goals and established a “Big Gifts” level for contributions over \$10,000 in February 1946.⁴⁰ The Big Gifts effort was an immediate success and the kick off meeting was declared, “the greatest outpouring of generosity ever witnessed in the history of American Jewry, or perhaps America.”⁴¹ Individual gift increases were publicly celebrated as men who had given \$2,500 in 1945 gave \$10,000 in 1946 and one man “from Philadelphia who gave \$1500 in 1945 gave \$15,000 at the Washington meeting.”⁴² Public commitments came to define UJA appeals and throughout the postwar period social pressure inspired continued and increased giving.⁴³

Despite these successes, the 1946 campaign reveals the naïveté of UJA leaders, who

⁴⁰ “New Standards of Giving,” *A Report to Members of the National Campaign Council*, Vol 1: No 1 (February 28, 1946) 1, Box 38, HAFP/AJA.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ The tradition of public declaration of gifts still continues at UJA events and for other Jewish organizations. Milton Goldin identifies this practice as unique to the Jewish community and cites it as one of several “aggressive” strategies used by American Jewish communal organizations that is not used by non-sectarian groups: “Where else does one find ‘card calling’ luncheons, published lists of donors (with gifts carefully noted) and meetings, meetings, meetings.” Milton Goldin, *Why They Give: American Jews and Their Philanthropies* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), ix.

believed that the crisis facing DPs in Europe would be solved in one year. By October 1946, only a few months after the first optimistic Big Gifts meeting, Edward M.M. Warburg, chairman of JDC, announced that they would have to ask people to continue giving at “one time gift” amounts into 1947. Warburg offered no apology, but said, “American Jewry might well ponder the feeling of the Jews in DP camps whom we had anticipated releasing this year and who now find, instead, that they will be sitting there two years after ‘liberation.’ The promises made to them have not been fulfilled.”⁴⁴ In this speech, Warburg articulated the failure of liberation to grant Jewish survivors access to new lives and, in so doing, acknowledged that the urgency of the postwar response by American Jews would have to be sustained long after they had planned. His remarks also point to the ways in which survivors were evoked to inspire giving in America; Warburg urged American Jews to empathize with their brethren overseas and to act on that empathy through financial giving.

How was this message communicated across the country and around the world? To reach ever-larger audiences and inspire giving beyond the big donors, UJA and other Jewish organizations relied on both traditional forms of campaign materials and employed mass media technologies, such as radio and film, to spread the word. Film technology, in particular, allowed Jewish organizations to convey visual evidence to provoke strong emotional responses. Jewish leaders from a range of organizations employed film technology for publicity, sponsoring one or two short films meant to reach a Jewish and a wider non-Jewish audience.⁴⁵ Only a few

⁴⁴ “Warburg on one-time giving” *A Report to Members of the National Campaign Council* special issue, October 16, 1946, 4, Box 39, Folder: UJA Report 1946, HAFP/AJA.

⁴⁵ ORT sponsored a short documentary that they described as “In about 15 minutes we want to contrast the demoralizing idleness and lack of purpose among vast numbers of adult Jews in Europe...with the constructive forward looking work of schools, workshops and farming projects of ORT.” Undated note, Folder 6, ORT/YIVO. ORT documentary footage, USHMM Video Archive. HIAS produced *Placing the Displaced*, YIVO Film Archive.

organizations, namely UJA, JDC, UIA/UPA, and Hadassah, had the resources and vision to use the new medium extensively.⁴⁶

Short documentary films (usually 15-30 minutes) were distributed from national offices to local chapters or rented out, generally at a rate of \$1 per film, and a large number of films circulated throughout the Jewish communal world for committee meetings and local events in this way.⁴⁷ Organizational leaders believed that these kinds of films could help raise funds with relative ease, but the films were also created for publicity purposes and spread knowledge about the plight of survivors through the frame of American intervention.⁴⁸ Through these films, Jewish audiences saw survivors in Europe and Israel and understood the living conditions that demanded continued aid. The narratives crafted for campaign speeches and print materials were reiterated in these films so that all campaign materials expressed the same central message through text and image.

Some films had a wider distribution, spreading stories of survivors to unaffiliated Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. Among these was the Hadassah film *They May Live Again*, which

Organizations like the Jewish National Fund (funded by UPA) and the Joint *Landsmenschaftn* both distributed films in the US, but do not appear to have financed any of their own films.

⁴⁶ Hadassah employed a full time film supervisor in Hazel Greenwald and the Joint relied on Raphael Levy, Marc Siegel, and Paul Falkenberg in its publicity department to write, supervise, and direct the films. The Joint also regularly received guidance from Al Paul Lefton, a well known and pioneering ad man. Yet, many of the UJA films were produced by RKO or March of Time, indicating that some organizations did not have the technical capacity to produce films on their own.

⁴⁷ For example, the National Education Department for the Zionist Organization of America advertised lists of films to their chapter Education chairs. In 1946, this list included, the JDC film, *The Will to Live*, *Shadow of Hate*, *Children of Destiny*, the UJA film *Battle for Survival*, *They Live Again*, *Forgotten Children*, and Mayer Levin's *Voyage of the Unafraid* about a Haganah immigration ship. The film brochure noted that because of the popularity of *Voyage of the Unafraid*, it had a rental cost of \$15. List of Films from National Education Department, Folder 182, LZOA/YIVO.

⁴⁸ A letter from Hadassah states that they felt the film could "help raise millions of dollars." Letter, April 1, 1946, Box 76, Folder 2, YAP/Hadassah.

depicted “harrowing experiences of Jewish refugee children in Europe.” The film was shown at the Lugano film festival in July 1947 and met with “great success,” thereby expanding the audience internationally.⁴⁹ The HIAS produced short film *Placing the Displaced*, which featured the story of DPs arriving in America, premiered on CBS Television on June 14, 1948 and narrated the success of Jewish survivors who assimilated into American life for a large American audience.⁵⁰ *Seeds of Destiny*, produced by UNRRA, won an Academy Award for Best Documentary Short in 1947 and is rumored to have raised over \$200 million dollars for war relief.⁵¹ These three films point to the diversity of postwar films about DPs and the refugee crisis of postwar Europe: Hadassah highlighted the journey of child survivors who were brought to Palestine, HIAS depicted the ability of survivors to adjust to an American way of life, and UNRRA warned of postwar dangers by asking, “What seeds of destiny will sprout from within these ravaged ranks...new Führers or new lovers of liberty?”⁵² In this way, each film represented survivors of Nazi atrocity through a story that celebrated its organization’s postwar priorities. Hadassah asserted that child survivors could “live again” in Palestine just as HIAS proclaimed America to be the land of possibility for Jewish survivors. UNRRA’s film, perhaps the most ambitious, championed the potential of American aid to determine the future of Europe and the world.

⁴⁹ Junior Hadassah Brochure, dated 1944-45, Box 15, Folder 11, OFPA/Hadassah. The film was also referred to as *They Live Again*, but the two titles seem to be referring to the same Hadassah produced film. Letter from Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky to Mrs. Eva Michaelis, letter 1070, July 30, 1947, Box 17, Folder 118, YAP/Hadassah. The letter asserts that the film showed at Lugano, but the film must have been showed at the Locarno film festival, not the Lugano film festival, which was only held in 1944 and 1945. Starting in 1946, Locarno took over the responsibilities. Hadassah seems to have established a relationship with the film festival organizers as their full-length feature, under its Israeli name, *Adamah*, was premiered at the Locarno film festival in 1948.

⁵⁰ *Placing the Displaced*, YIVO Film Archive.

⁵¹ The rumor is rooted in the Wikipedia entry for *Seeds of Destiny* and is also included in the USHMM Video Archive catalog entry for the film. *Seeds of Destiny*, Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

⁵² *Seeds of Destiny*, USHMM.

Just as these films integrated the stories of survivors with that of organizational intervention, UJA produced the film *Battle for Survival* to document their historic 1946 campaign and convey the potential of Jewish organizations to alleviate the suffering of Jews in Europe. The film was narrated by Orson Welles and juxtaposed the December 1945 Atlantic City conference that announced the \$100,000,000 campaign with the ragged Jewish DPs of Europe. The film, distributed across the country and internationally through UJA-affiliated Jewish organizations, offers a way to consider the simultaneous visual and narrative representations of survivors crafted by UJA according to the 1946 theme of survival. As such, the film illustrates the dual representation of survivors as simultaneously devastated and hopeful. *Battle for Survival* also defines the relationship of American Jews and survivors as one based on responsibility and financial urgency.

Battle for Survival opens with a shot of feet: the feet are barefoot or wrapped in rags and walking on a dusty road. Welles' dramatic, deep, and recognizable voice narrates, "Once, long ago, these feet were shod. Once, long ago, they turned homeward every evening..." As the camera pans out, the feet reveal people who are also wrapped in rags and walking slowly down a dusty road. Welles continues, "These are remnants of a people, let them represent the 1.5 million European Jews incredibly alive, hardly a fraction more alive than when their six million brothers were starved and burned to death."⁵³ Through this introduction, the film represents survivors on the brink of death and suggests that the answer to this devastation is American Jewish aid: "...for these, there is but one hope, the United Jewish Appeal." The film then jumps from Europe to the UJA annual meeting in Atlantic City and the images of ragged survivors are countered by those

⁵³ *Battle for Survival*, RKO Pathe Inc, 1946, Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

of well-groomed American men—the leaders of UJA and members of the military and political establishments. Among the parade of men is William Rosenwald, a co-founder of UJA and one of three national chairmen from 1942-1946, Edward Warburg, co-Chairman of JDC from 1939-1965, Joseph Schwartz, JDC European Director, Earl Harrison, author of the Harrison Report, which documented the treatment of Jews in European DP camps, and Col. Judah Nadich, Eisenhower's advisor on displaced persons.

Among the leaders assembled in New Jersey was Joseph Rosensaft, a survivor of Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen, and an elected leader of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews.⁵⁴ In the film, Rosensaft is described as a “frail, flame of a man” and the film’s audience is asked to consider the weight of his speech by imagining his experience of having “all loved ones murdered in battles of Polish ghettos, then the ingenious tortures of six concentration camps.”⁵⁵ Yet, the visual image belies the description of Rosensaft as “frail.” He appears alongside the other men, standing tall and looking equally well dressed. The visual representation of Rosensaft better supports the assertion that the losses of the war years “have not defeated him.” This introduction highlights the tension in UJA materials between depicting Europe’s Jews as devastated victims and as triumphant survivors.

The film further complicates a representation of survivors by implicating Americans in the story of the Holocaust. Over an image of skeletal survivors, still dressed in striped camp uniforms and languishing behind a fence (an image that would support Steinberg and Biale’s sense of powerlessness), Welles voice commands, “We are survivors too...of Buchenwald, of

⁵⁴ Rosensaft was the chairman of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in 1946. The committee was organized in the Bergen-Belsen DP camp in 1945 and served as a voice for Jewish survivors in DP Camps for the British zone until 1950.

⁵⁵ *Battle for Survival*, USHMM.

Bergen-Belsen, of Nordhausen, Dachau, but for some accident of birth or lucky migration, we might have a role in this wretchedness.”⁵⁶ Here, Welles’ narration seems to force the audience to relate to the survivors, establishing a link between all Jews and provoking American Jews to imagine themselves as the victims. The “we” of Welles’ narration is unspecific. Is he addressing American Jews who might also have been victims in Nazi Europe? Or, is he speaking to all Americans who might have been perpetrators in “this wretchedness”? Perhaps the narration is trying to recognize the essential humanity and innocence of the victims, urging all audiences, both Jewish and non-Jewish, to identify with them, but there is no clarity. Rather, Welles addresses the audience with judgment, saying, “You from your safe vantage may never comprehend.”⁵⁷ He seems to demand a sense of culpability at the same time that he articulates the need for compassion, generosity, and appreciation.

Bauer, who argues that guilt played a significant role in postwar Jewish philanthropy, has also called attention to the need for American Jewish leaders to build association between American and European Jews. Speaking only of the JDC, Bauer asserted that the organization “use[d]” the images of the camps and testimonies of returning GIs in “the most effective way it knew how to produce identification with the plight of European Jewry on the part of American Jews.”⁵⁸ *Battle for Survival* seems to insist upon this sense of identification through a sharp reminder of “some accident of birth or lucky migration” that removed American Jews from the terror of Nazism. The images that matched this part of the narration are similarly evocative: news

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid. The previous chapter explores the idea that American audiences could never understand the reality of what happened. This idea is well examined in scholarship about Holocaust survivor testimony from the 1980s and 90s and was also evident in early postwar responses.

⁵⁸ Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xviii.

footage of a rope being tied to a gallows, a blunt farm tool, and an open crematoria, each of which suggests that American audiences might have been either possible victims or possible perpetrators.

Yet, Americans were quickly transformed from possible participants to necessary saviors. Welles narrates, “Once Hitler had the decision of life or death. Now, that decision is ours.”⁵⁹ This is not a call for identification, but to action. American Jews were prompted to act because the decision of life and death was in their hands. In this way, *Battle for Survival* presented its titular battle; the DPs survived liberation, but continued to struggle and only American donations and generosity could save them. The urgency around fundraising created through the film reached a crescendo in the final appeal, made at the Atlantic City meeting by the only woman speaker. Adele Levy, Chairman of the UJA National Women’s Council, shamed the assembled leaders, and in turn the film audience, for not sacrificing enough for the cause of Jewish survivors. Levy passionately delivered the core of her speech to big applause:

Unless you care enough, and unless I care enough, we cannot succeed in this great undertaking...not one of us, including myself has ever made one real sacrifice for this cause. Some of us have felt very good. Some of us have felt that we have given generously...Has one of us sacrificed something that we really wanted in a material sense? For these are suffering, bleeding, starving persecuted people. And I think the answer is no.⁶⁰

Following this call to action, Welles ends the film by asking, “Can we spare it?”. With this ending the film explicitly appealed for American Jewish donations by constructing identification with European Jews and demanding a “real sacrifice” – a theme picked up in 1947.

⁵⁹ *Battle for Survival*, USHMM. This exact phrasing is used repeatedly in UJA materials and other organizational appeals. In a radio broadcast detailed in chapter five, Paul Muni uses the same construction to urge American action around immigration reform.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Jews around the world echoed this call as well. *Battle for Survival* was aired in Canada with an extra ending.⁶¹ Samuel Bronfman, leader of the United Jewish Relief Agencies of Canada, made a direct appeal to the Jews of Canada as an addendum to the film. He sat stiffly behind a desk, looked straight at the camera and read:

We were spared the horrors of war and the pictures we have seen must rend the heart of every thinking and feeling Jew in this country. They bring within our vision the plight of our wandering people, still wandering the face of Europe, still homeless. Those impoverished children's bodies little more than living skeletons...cry out to us for help. Seeing is understanding, understanding is feeling. And to feel is to open our hearts and purses.⁶²

In this way, Bronfman asserted that the power of film was its ability to project visual images of children and other survivors to evoke emotional responses and financial giving from its viewing audience. He overtly connected the representation of surviving Jews as "living skeletons" with the opening of hearts and, significantly, purses.

Other organizations similarly relied on the moving images of survivors to motivate giving, using other technologies, such as slides and film strips to create an emotional response from their audience. The Hadassah slide show, "Look at their Faces" was distributed to local chapters with an accompanying script to generate a "moving and powerful fundraising push." As images of young child survivors were projected at local meetings, chapter leaders were instructed to say, "You have heard what children endured in Europe... You have hoped and laughed with

⁶¹ Other groups also sent their films to chapters around the world. The Hadassah film *They May Live Again* sold out its run through South Africa in 1947 and played across Europe for "propaganda" purposes. Interestingly, when the European staff members asked for more copies, Kramarsky, the co-chairperson of Youth Aliyah remarked that the "purposes of use of our material is really limited to the United States." Letter dated December 15, 1947, Box 17, Folder 118, YAP/Hadassah.

⁶² The film archive at the USHMM has two copies of *Battle for Survival*. Tape 2296 includes this extra appeal that so clearly states the power and possibility of film.

them in Palestine. Before you go, I want you to LOOK AT THEIR FACES.”⁶³ The appeal was rooted in the visual images of children that accentuated their stories of tragedy. Similarly, a slide show at the December 1945 fundraising dinner for Vaad Hatzala used slide images of survivors to encourage giving. The script explicitly detailed the tortures of Buchenwald, narrating, “The gates of Hell close on the living...These to the gas chambers, these to slave labor and shame...these to be made into fat and blood...these to dig their own grave.”⁶⁴ Later the leader performing as the slideshow narrator was instructed to address the audience and ask, “In God’s sight, can we say we have done all we could? Vaad Hatzalah speaks to the purity of your hearts!...Jews of America...for mercy and help and love, to save, to keep alive, and bring hope, and warmth and light.”⁶⁵ This appeal echoed that of Adele Levy to the leaders of UJA: have they sacrificed enough? For each of these organizations, the vehicle to drive that question into the hearts of donors was through the visual and narrative stories of the Jewish survivors.

As the 1947 campaign was launched, the narratives of survivors remained central to unifying an American Jewish appeal, but unlike the previous year, the campaign slogan, “Year of Sacrifice,” turned the attention from the survivors to the American donors. The campaign relied on the concept of sacrifice to further build a sense of identification between American and European Jews, as a 1947 campaign booklet declared, “The years between 1933 and 1946 were years which witnessed the Jews overseas making sacrifice after sacrifice – they lost their homes,

⁶³ “Look at their faces,” Box 23, Folder 172: Publicity Stories, YAP/Hadassah.

⁶⁴ Narrative for Slides, Vaad Hatzala Dinner, December 17, 1945, Box 6, Folder 49, Vaad Hatzala Papers (VHP), Yeshiva University Manuscripts Collection.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

their hopes, their lives. Now 1947 has come – our year for sacrifice.”⁶⁶ UJA national chairman, Henry Morgenthau, Jr., echoed the need for sacrifice and more explicitly expressed the identification American Jews should have with their European “brethren” when he wrote, “You and I – we cannot rest, we cannot enjoy the good things of life as long as we know that our brethren are wandering across the face of Europe, homeless and without permanent roots.”⁶⁷ In this way, Morgenthau inserted American Jews into the stories of survivors by casting them as necessary saviors.

The assertion of American Jews as the “only hope of survival” was still a resonant message in 1947, even as the postwar reality in Europe began to shift. The needs of Jewish survivors were no longer the immediate needs of medical aid and shelter, but long term resettlement and moral support to withstand continued displacement. A 1947 UJA campaign brochure articulated this shift for American donors:

"The Jewish crisis has not only grown in its proportions, but changed in its nature since December 1945. The Jewish survivors were considered the victims of war and the remnants of savage Nazi persecution which brought about the death of six million of their kin. Today these Jewish survivors are the greatest sufferers from a universal crisis which has had its most serious impact on Europe. Whatever hopes were had last year that the non-Jewish world would participate substantially in the work of relief, rehabilitation, and resettlement are not being realized, at least in the measure required by the urgency and tragedy of the Jewish position. In 1947, as in 1946, the support - financial and moral - which the Jews of Europe need must come from American Jews as their last and almost only hope of survival."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ “Here are the Facts about the 1947 Campaign,” United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York, Box 206, Folder 2, USTC/YIVO.

⁶⁷ Los Angeles United Jewish Welfare Fund, *1947 Year Book*, (Los Angeles Jewish Community Council, 1947).

⁶⁸ “What are the facts?: The basis for the \$170,000,000 United Jewish Appeal in 1947,” brochure, YIVO Library.

The changing realities of the postwar world, including violence in Poland, political upheaval in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, and weather patterns that produced low crops in Europe, increased the number of stateless Jews in American-run DP camps and increased pressure around emigration. In the wake of these changes, Jewish survivors (and Jewish organizations like JDC) largely abandoned hopes to rehabilitate Jewish life in Poland and Czechoslovakia and the financial demands for supporting DP camps increased. The hopes of 1946 to quickly bring about resolution to Jewish displacement were dashed and UJA urged American Jewish sacrifice for increased giving. At the same time, Jewish survivors were no longer the “victims of war” or the “remnants of savage Nazi persecution” but victims of the universal crises of displacement, hunger, and cold.

Although UJA managed to outdo their historic campaign of 1946, they could not reach the stated \$170,000,000 goal in 1947.⁶⁹ The enthusiasm and urgency of 1946 waned in 1947, but a renewed intensity for fundraising gained momentum as the Jewish world shifted yet again on November 29, 1947 following the UN vote to partition Palestine. This vote called for the creation of independent Jewish and Arab states after the withdrawal of the British by August

⁶⁹ A report given at that National Conference of the United Jewish Appeal in Atlantic City, on December 12, 1947 by Isidor Coons and Henry Montor notes that although the “greatest hope” for “the suffering Jews of Europe” was the partition vote in the UN, that because of changing conditions in Europe and around the world, the need was increasing and that even the \$170,000,000 goal was not enough. The report also noted that even the \$170,000,000 was not going to be met. The report does not give a total, stating that some campaigns are ongoing, but estimates that the total campaign would raise about \$125,000,000 even though only \$92,700,000 had yet been recorded in pledges and only about \$70,000,000 had been collected in cash. “Report to the National Conference of the United Jewish Appeal in Atlantic City,” December 12, 1947, Isidor Coons and Henry Montor, Box 27A, Folder 12, USTC/YIVO.

1948 and the end of the British Mandate.⁷⁰ The real possibility of a Jewish state and the end of the British Mandate resonated with American Jews and American Jewish leaders, particularly those who had long been fighting for the Zionist cause, and strengthened the connections of UJA's messaging. The 1947 booklet quoted above that defined survivors as "the Pioneer," "the Survivor," and "the Newcomer" was distributed with an attached note that reshaped these survivor narratives according to the new political reality. The short memo explained that the content of the book had been produced before the UN declaration about Palestine, but, "far from minimizing any part of the program described in the following pages, these actions heighten the needs of the Jewish people overseas and make it still more imperative for us to give maximum support to the men, women, and children served by the United Jewish Appeal agencies." The note further defined the identification between Jews around the world, ending, "We must give them the fortitude that comes from knowing they are not alone."⁷¹ The partition of Palestine and the possibility of a Jewish state did not alter the centrality of aiding Jewish survivors, but rather "heightened" the immediacy of those needs and further demanded generous giving from American Jews.

The Year of Destiny and the optimism of UJA's 1948 Campaign

⁷⁰ The plan also called for international governance of Jerusalem. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181 was passed by a 33 to 13 majority, with the support of the United States, the Soviet Union, as well as much of Latin America and Western Europe. The Jewish Agency represented the Jewish community of Palestine and supported the plan, while the Arab governments of the Middle East rejected the plan by voting against it in the General Assembly. "United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181," The Avalon Project at Yale Law School, accessed at: <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/un/res181.htm>. For more about the 1947 vote, see Michael J. Cohen, "Truman and Palestine, 1945-48: Revisionism, Politics and Diplomacy," in *Palestine to Israel: From Mandate to Independence* (London and Totowa, N.J.: F. Cass, 1988) and Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁷¹ "Memorandum from the 1948 Campaign Chairman, United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York," Box 206, Folder 2, USTC/YIVO.

In 1948, the theme of destiny was ubiquitous in American Jewish life. The UJA campaign was designated as the “Year of Destiny” and the idea reverberated in all campaign materials; UJA’s film, *Dollars for Destiny*, explicitly demanded cash from American donors to realize the state of Israel; an oversized booklet, “Maps of Destiny” printed maps of the new Jewish state alongside traditional appeal language; and speeches of UJA leaders throughout the year referred to the destiny of the Jewish people, connecting the fates of American Jews with the survivors and Jews around the world.⁷² These appeals continued to promote American Jewry as the only answer to challenges facing world Jewry in the postwar period, including the historic challenge of Jewish statehood; only if American Jews gave beyond their capacity could a Jewish state be realized. UJA set a goal of \$250,000,000 to support the creation of the new state, the military necessities of defending the new state, and the stream of emigration out of Europe. To further bolster Jewish efforts in Palestine, UJA also shifted the allotment agreement so that UPA received the majority of UJA funds for the first time.⁷³ The shift in UJA priorities was permanent; UPA received 60% – 70% of totals raised from 1949 – 1955.⁷⁴

Fundraising efforts across the country (and around the world) were reenergized by the possibility for and the creation of a Jewish state. Although UJA failed to raise \$250 million, total estimates range from \$150 million to \$200 million, an incredible amount considering American

⁷² *Dollars for Destiny*, USHMM Film Archive. “Map of Destiny,” YIVO library. Examples of the use of the term destiny include, among countless others, a film strip by the National Educational Department of the Zionist Organization of America called “Children of Destiny,” described as “The human story of the children who come to Israel-homeless, orphaned, despairing - and of their training for healthy, useful citizenship.” “Filmstrips on Israel,” Box 8, Folder 5, USTC/YIVO.

⁷³ The negotiations resulted in a tiered dispersal: UPA received 45% of the first \$50 million collected and 55% of the next \$75 million collected. UPA was also allotted 75% of monies up to the goal of \$250 million and if more had been collected, UPA would have received 100%. Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, Table 4:1 “UJA Campaign Finances: 1939 – 1948,” 136. See also, Milton Goldin, *Why they give: American Jews and their philanthropies* (New York: Macmillan, 1976), 196.

⁷⁴ Raphael, *A History of the United Jewish Appeal*, Table 5:1 “UJA Campaign Finances: 1949 – 1955,” 137.

Jews (and non-Jewish partners) had already raised over \$100 million in each of the two previous years.⁷⁵ The spirit of the 1948 campaign cannot be understated. The Jewish press reported that the 1948 campaign reflected gifts from more than 1,000,000 individual donors and community leaders took out loans to respond to the desperate calls for cash.⁷⁶

Survivors remained central to the rhetoric of Jewish communal organizations even as the attention of Jews around the world turned towards Israel and the Jewish state was often portrayed as the happy ending survivors needed. This narrative was particularly resonant for JDC, which continued to manage Jewish aid in DP camps and across Europe throughout this period. The 1948 JDC film, *The Future can be Theirs*, exemplified the way survivors were represented in the new Jewish landscape and how the story of Jewish tragedy was transformed into one of rebirth.⁷⁷ Like *Battle for Survival*, *The Future can be Theirs* was 20 minutes long and jumped between scenes in America and in Europe, weaving together the stories of survivors with that of American aid. *The Future can be Theirs* begins at a meeting of JDC leaders Edward M.M. Warburg, Herbert H. Lehman, Harold Linder, and Moses A. Leavitt as they discussed the

⁷⁵ The total collection from 1948 has been cited as high as \$200,000,000. Shapiro, *Time for Healing*. But, a JTA article from January 3, 1949, cites \$150,000,000 raised from more than 1,000,000 Jewish contributors. The article also calls the 1948 UJA campaign the “greatest campaign in the history of private philanthropy.” “United Jewish Appeal Raised Total of \$150,000,000 in 1948, National Chairmen Report.” *Jewish Telegraphic Agency*, January 3, 1949. Accessed at: <http://www.jta.org/1949/01/03/archive/united-jewish-appeal-raised-total-of-150000000-in-1948-national-chairmen-report>.

⁷⁶ A May 25, 1948 report to UJA campaign leaders included the slogan: “pledges are a promise of life – cash is life itself.” These bi-monthly reports reiterated the urgency for cash, not pledges throughout 1948. By the summer of 1949, these appeals were successful enough for the Los Angeles Federation to take out a loan of \$1 million as a donation to UJA. Report, September 26, 1949. All reports: Box 38, HAFP/AJA.

⁷⁷ *The Future Can be Theirs*, JDC, Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The minutes indicate that 60 copies of the film were sent to “key communities” in “US, Canada, Latin America, South Africa, and Australia” with more copies to be distributed soon. Executive Minutes, June 15, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY.

success of past JDC work and the efforts still underway to rehabilitate Jews in Europe.⁷⁸ These leaders continued to narrate the rest of the film as the scenes cut to DP camp footage to document how JDC funds were spent.

The film seems to respond to donor concern that the DP camps of Europe still demanded American aid and, thus, defends JDC work in Europe by portraying images of JDC workers who worked “to heal, to council and to save fellow Jews” and of trucks loaded with packaged food, narrated as, “a huge defensive against hunger.” The past generosity of American Jewish donors was quantified as JDC leaders narrated, “In three years, JDC has put 165 million lbs of supplies into Europe. Enough to put food on the plates of $\frac{3}{4}$ of a million people.”⁷⁹ Through these examples, *The Future can be Theirs* documented the successes of JDC and argued for its continued importance, declaring that survivors were “still alive *because* the JDC was there.” The film also made clear that American Jews continued to be responsible for the future of Jewish survivors.

The end of the film best portrayed this imperative by documenting a Passover Seder at the DP camp. As the camera panned across a room filled with long tables and hundreds of people, the narrator invoked the story of Passover to describe the journey of Europe’s surviving Jews during and after the war: “We have helped bring them out of bondage. We have helped deliver them from death. We have promised them a future. Now we must help them still so that

⁷⁸ Warburg was the JDC Chairman, Lehman was a Vice Chairman of JDC and the former Director General of UNRRA, Linder was also Vice Chair of JDC, and Leavitt was JDC’s executive Vice President. The men are all well-established figures and yet look awkward and uncomfortable on screen. They narrate the film in a stiff manner as opposed to Welles’ smooth and dramatic narration of *Battle for Survival*.

⁷⁹ *The Future can be Theirs*.

the future can be theirs.”⁸⁰ In this way, the film cast American Jewry as Moses, the ultimate saviors who could bring their fellow Jews out of bondage and into the Promised Land.

Hasia Diner illustrates the cultural use of Passover as a time of Holocaust commemoration in postwar America by citing the Seder Ritual of Remembrance, which stated that Hitler was “a tyrant more wicked than the Pharaoh who enslaved our fathers in Egypt.”⁸¹ Even as she recognizes the regularity with which Passover became a time for ritualized Holocaust commemoration, Diner questions the applicability of one story in the services of the other. She asserts that God’s intervention in the Passover story makes it an “inappropriate” model for “recalling the victims” because “God had been noticeably absent from the 1930s onward” when the Jews of Europe most needed deliverance.⁸² Yet, appropriating the story of Passover in relation to the postwar experience of survivors seems significantly more appropriate, particularly in 1948, when the promise of a future would be in Israel. For the JDC leaders narrating *The Future can be Theirs*, the pairing of Jewish bondage and deliverance in the Passover story to that of Jewish survivors positioned American Jews as saviors in a particularly Jewish way and raised the stakes of Jewish philanthropy in the postwar period. In the shadow of Passover, American Jews were not only responsible for saving Jewish lives in Europe, but they were preserving the continuity of Jewish life since the Exodus from Egypt.

Nonetheless, the film also portrayed life in DP camps, maintaining a tension between the tragic past and promising future by portraying survivors as a “renewed people.” Extended footage of a soccer game and children running on a beach by the ocean connoted life, vitality,

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Cited in Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love*, 18.

⁸² Ibid., 61.

and health and depicted the “rebirth” of Jews in Europe. Nowhere is this transformation better visualized than with an image of a young girl sewing in *The Future can be Theirs*. The girl is first revealed from far away and as the camera zooms in, a tattoo can be seen on her arm. The voice-over reports that this young woman is “working towards the future while blotting out the past.”⁸³ The visible tattoo represented her past and the sewing workshop (sponsored by JDC) ensured that she would have a productive future.

Number tattoos on survivor arms already served as symbols of the Holocaust in the immediate postwar period and became a repeated visual motifs in brochures, journals, newsletters, magazines, and newsreels. They recalled the inhumanity of the concentration camps and visually evoked Nazi crimes against the Jews. *The Future can be Theirs* did not need specific details to describe the Holocaust or convince American Jews to give because the visual reference of the tattoo was signifier enough. In the context of the film, the tattoo allowed the past, present, and future to coexist in one frame as the tragedy of the war, the revitalization of the DP period, and the future in a Jewish state were all projected. Thus, even as she worked to “blot out the past,” this young girl represented both the horrors of the Holocaust and the promise of the future.

The Year of Destiny beyond UJA

The overlapping stories of past and future found expression in the urgency and optimism of the Year of Destiny campaign – a theme that was palpable in campaign materials for non-UJA organizations as well. That a sense of destiny pervaded all avenues of Jewish organizational life

⁸³ *The Future Can be Theirs*.

reflected both the influence of UJA across America Jewry and the sense of historic possibility for Jews in 1948. In some ways, this narrative structure sheds light on contemporary conceptions of silence in the aftermath of the war. Public assertion that survivors should “blot out the past” does not support an environment of openness or a cultural commitment to listening. However, the forward looking narrative was embedded in a recognition of Nazi terror. This sensibility did not encourage historic preservation of testimonies of the kind survivors produced, organized, and collected across Europe, but it was not a call for silence. Rather, publicity narratives directed at American Jewish donors, like *The Future can be Theirs* and other fundraising materials, relied on a certain shared understanding of the Holocaust to justify the continued need for aid. A closer look at these materials reveals complex representations that referred to and remembered the past, even while asserting a turn away from it.

A program distributed by the Pioneer Women’s national office illustrates this dichotomy through another story about Passover.⁸⁴ As part of a possible 1948 Passover event, “From the Old to the New,” Labor Zionist Women across the country performed a skit titled, “From the Warsaw Ghetto to the Gates of Hope.”⁸⁵ The script called for two chapter members to perform as two friends at their settlement in Israel thinking about Passovers missed during the war. One

⁸⁴ The role of women in postwar Jewish fundraising for survivors deserves attention that cannot be sustained here. Particularly in order to recognize that women were appealed to as mothers for the child survivors of postwar Europe. For example, an appeal for the American Committee for the Rehabilitation of European Children was directed at Jewish women and asked in reference to an image of DP children, “Who will mother them on Mother’s Day?” Postcard Appeal, Box D78, Folder 9: Publicity, World Jewish Congress (WJC) Papers, AJA. Shulamit Reinharz and Mark Raider have collected works that examine women’s roles in Zionism in Shulamit Reinharz and Mark A. Raider, *American Jewish women and the Zionist enterprise* (Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2005) and several studies consider the relationship between women and philanthropy, but none have yet identified the particular ways in which American women responded to the particular needs of Holocaust survivors in the postwar period. See also, Mary McCune, *The whole wide world, without limits: international relief, gender politics, and American Jewish women, 1893-1930* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2005) and Kathleen D. McCarthy, *Lady bountiful revisited: women, philanthropy, and power* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1990).

⁸⁵ Diner notes that one of the primary reasons Passover became a time for commemoration was because it was anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Diner, *We remember with Reverence and Love*, 62.

friend asks, “Dear friend, dear sister, do you recall what we were doing a year ago at this time?” and the second friend responds, “No, don’t glance backwards to our greatest despair. Must we always remind ourselves of how we slept in the woods and ran at the sounds of a human footfall?”⁸⁶ After recalling Passovers with their families from many years ago, they counted themselves lucky to have fulfilled the promise of Passover, to be in Israel. The skit ended with the friends declaring, “Let us look forward - to many Passovers here – to holidays that shall spell new freedoms.”⁸⁷ The skit represented the hopeful journey of young Holocaust survivors to Israel and fulfilled the promise of JDC’s film: that those free from bondage could find a future in the Jewish state. According to the script, part of the transformation of these young survivors into Israelis was to look forward instead of back, but one of the main characters continued to remember and the joy of their present was defined in light of the past.

Hadassah also evoked the optimism of the day, producing a feature film titled *Tomorrow is a Wonderful Day*. The title alone suggests the idea that faith in the future could help alleviate the pain of the past, but the film similarly depicted how the past continued to co-exist with the present and future. *Tomorrow is a Wonderful Day* focuses on a teen-aged survivor named Benjamin who arrived in Palestine through Hadassah’s Youth Aliyah program, which sponsored immigration to Palestine for orphaned children and provided housing and education for these

⁸⁶ “From the Old to the New,” Pioneer Women, April Program Calendar, 5, Folder 252, LZOAYIVO.

⁸⁷ Another “From the Old to the New” program was a silhouetted show, “Return to Life,” the “story of two girls who passed through the tragedy of Europe” who end up at the Maotzat Hapoalot, a training farm for girls. The story ends by connecting the struggle of the two girls directly to the celebration of Passover, “This Peasach called also the Festival of Freedom, should be a source of courage for Jews the world over. We gave the world the meaning of liberation from slavery. Too large a part of the world has as yet not been freed from the bondage of tyranny, injustice, inhumanity. In our struggle in Palestine we can but muster hope and strength that through our joint redoubled efforts we will yet enjoy a true... era of our liberation.” “From the Old to the New,” 6, Pioneer Women, April Program Calendar, Folder 252, LZOAYIVO.

young people.⁸⁸ Benjamin was moody and disruptive and had trouble adjusting to life at the Ben Shemen Youth Village in Palestine, but over the course of the film Benjamin assimilated to postwar life in Palestine and eventually started a new kibbutz with other young survivors.

Although fictionalized, *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day* was filmed at the real Ben Shemen Youth Village, a community that welcomed teen-aged survivors during and after the war, and featured survivors who played the inhabitants of the village.⁸⁹ In other words, the film fictionalized the real experiences of its performers, a fact of profound meaning to Hadassah and the film's creators. As the opening title screen describes:

There are no actors in the film. It was conceived, produced and developed in a Children's Village in Israel. It speaks so poignantly because these boys and girls are playing out the story of their lives. They have come from the blackness and doom of European ghettos and concentration camps. They have found shelter, love and peace in Israel through the Youth Aliyah movement.⁹⁰

Framed in this way, *Tomorrow is a Wonderful Day* was aware of its own performativity. The young survivors acted out their own stories and, at the same time, staged an idealized Youth Aliyah trajectory from the darkness of Europe to the light and love of Israel. This narrative arc mirrored the other kinds of survivor stories explored here that focused on the future as a way to

⁸⁸ *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day*, The Spielberg Jewish Film Archive, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iXkhML3MHk>. Youth Aliyah was established by the Jewish Agency in Palestine in cooperation with Hadassah, which served as the primary fundraiser and American representative of the program. In 1935, Youth Aliyah began bringing German children from Nazi Germany to Palestine and establishing children's villages. The effort lasted through the war and increased its potential in the post war period. When the war ended, Youth Aliyah brought thousands of children to Palestine and then Israel – children from all countries and backgrounds including those who had survived the camps as well as those who had been hidden had been during the war. Throughout this time, Hadassah remained the primary representative for Youth Aliyah in America and continued to raise funds for the program, publicizing the work by featuring pamphlets, newsletters, articles, and short films about young survivors.

⁸⁹ Ben Shemen was founded by Dr. Siegfried Lehmann in 1927 to teach children how to work the land and develop Zionist ideals. Following the 1948 war, the village had to be relocated within the new state boundaries. The village still exists as an agricultural school for children in Israel.

⁹⁰ Opening Title Sequence, *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day*, Spielberg Film Archive.

“blot out” the past. The film thus illuminates many of the issues at stake in this study, including the malleability of survivor representations, the transformation of European stories for American donors, and the integration of contemporary concerns into Holocaust narratives.

Before turning to the content of the film, it’s important to note that there were actually two films produced from the same Hadassah funded film shoot: the Hazel Greenwald edited *Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day* and the Israeli film *Adamah* was edited by director Helmar Lerski.⁹¹ *Adamah* premiered at the Locarno film festival in July 1948, making it the first Israeli film to play internationally and first ran in Tel Aviv in October 1948.⁹² *Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day* premiered at the Stanley Theater in New York City on April 9, 1949.⁹³ The differences between these two films reflect the differences between American and Israeli audiences as well as the Jewish values of these connected, but geographically distant, populations. Both versions of the film document life at the Children’s Village, including scenes of young people farming, working, playing, dancing, eating at communal tables, sitting in classes and learning. In this way, the film fulfilled it’s mission to “express the idea of Youth Aliyah” and, in focusing on Benjamin, the film also realized the intention of its creators to show “the development of a sixteen year old boy coming from a concentration camp to his settling down on a new land.”⁹⁴ These dual ambitions, articulated by the scriptwriter, Dr. Siegfried Lehmann, who was also the director of the real Ben Shemen Youth Village, fueled the cooperation between Hadassah and

⁹¹ Hazel Greenwald was the founder and director of Hadassah’s film department since 1944. Helmar Lerski was a photographer and director who had emigrated to Palestine in 1932. *Adamah* was Lerski’s final film.

⁹² Box 31, Folder 229A, OFPA/Hadassah. For more information about the first run of the films see Cinematography of the Holocaust, <http://www.cine-holocaust.de/cgi-bin/gdq?efw00fbw000299.gd>.

⁹³ A.W., “‘Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day,’ About Orphans’ Rehabilitation in Israel, at the Stanley,” *New York Times* April 11, 1949.

⁹⁴ Letter from Dr. Siegfried Lehmann to Mrs. Hazel Greenwald, July 21, 1947, Box 31, Folder 229A, OFPA/Hadassah.

Lerski. That leaders at Hadassah additionally hoped the film could “be a stimulus for fundraising” among American audiences eventually led to the creation of two different films.⁹⁵

The changes to the content of the film thus illuminate how survivor representations were constructed through fundraising efforts aimed at American audiences and, although the arc of Benjamin’s story from reluctant villager to joyful participant is depicted in each film, three particular scenes are rearranged to alter his progress and ultimate redemption. Benjamin, a sixteen-year-old Holocaust survivor, is introduced as a sullen, angry young man; he hides his bags, hoards bread, and refuses to work because he “worked enough for Hitler.”⁹⁶ In *Adamah*, the first key scene shows Benjamin carrying a torch into the village Channukah ceremony as a means towards assimilation in the community.⁹⁷ Through participation in this ceremony, Benjamin finds his first meaningful engagement in Palestine and feels connected to the other children of the village. This scene is quickly followed by Benjamin’s breaking point in a scene that portrays the trauma of the Holocaust. While working in the field, Benjamin walks towards the edge of the village land and encounters a wire fence that caged the cows. He becomes disoriented and confuses the fence for the barbed wire at a concentration camp, prompting him to attack the fence with his hoe and open up the animal enclosure. Cows break through the fence, ruin the garden and awaken Benjamin from his state. In this scene, the footage of the young survivor in Palestine is intercut with historical footage from a concentration camp and the images are layered on top of one another, visually portraying Benjamin in both moments – although he

⁹⁵ Letter from Eva Michaelis to Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, May 2, 1946, Box 13, Folder 73, YAP/Hadassah.

⁹⁶ *Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day*.

⁹⁷ These scenes are described in detail in a book produced for the 50th anniversary of the film’s production by the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive as part of an exhibit about the film. *Adamah: A Vanished Film*, Box 5, YAP/Hadassah.

is physically in Palestine, he is emotionally back in the camps. Like *The Future can be Theirs*, *Adamah* and *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day* layered visual references of the past onto images of the postwar experiences of survivors to tell stories that convey past and present simultaneously.

In *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day*, Benjamin's narration for this scene explains his violent attack of the fence. He says, "I saw the camp...I felt it like something in a nightmare...and this time, I was going to fight back."⁹⁸ Immediately after destroying the fence, Benjamin squats in the fields, looking at the destruction he has created and the camera zooms in on the number tattooed on his arm. Again, the visual cue of the tattoo signals the concentration camps, but here the historical footage of barbed wire serves as an additional symbol. The American voice over marks this as a turning point as Benjamin recognizes, "God has been good to me," and "for the first time" he "bowed his head and wept."⁹⁹

Adamah similarly employs this scene as a pivotal moment for Benjamin as he first recognizes the splendor and possibility of his life ahead. Following this scene in both versions, Benjamin returns to the world around him and decides to feel alive. In *Adamah*, these two scenes represent a process of returning to life and Benjamin's final redemption comes two years later when he leads a group to a new settlement. Benjamin's ultimate return and survival is found through working the land (*Adamah* means "land" or "earth" in Hebrew). The film shows Benjamin riding in a truck with other teenagers towards their new settlement as singing voices grow louder on the sound track and concludes as they get off the truck in the open desert and begin to move rocks and dig into the earth.

⁹⁸ *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day*.

⁹⁹ *Ibid*.

When Greenwald re-edited the film, she switched the placement of these three scenes, first depicting Benjamin's breakdown at the barbed wire fence. In *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day*, this scene is immediately transformational; his integration with the community is not a slow process, but one that is prompted by his emotional catharsis. To make this point, Greenwald placed the scene in which Benjamin begins to clear the new settlement land directly after his confrontation with the fence. He sees the promise of being part of the village and commits to working the land, even if it is hard. He says, "I know stone. For seven years, it was my enemy... What I did not know, in this land, there was treasure under the stone." In the American film, the land was not the final redemption, but a step towards the community, an important element along the way. Benjamin even says, "I needed Earth to become a man."¹⁰⁰

The final redemption, then, comes not from the earth, but from carrying the torch to the menorah lighting ceremony and participating in the religious ceremony of his community. This change reconstructed the survivor journey toward life through a more American conception of Judaism, a transformation well understood by Hadassah leadership and articulated as one that "took the emphasis away from the earth and placed it more on a belonging with one's people."¹⁰¹ Through this significant change in narrative, *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day* reflected the emerging postwar Jewish identity and also provided a model for Jewish communal engagement in America.¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Notes from Hazel Greenwald, Box 5, YAP/Hadassah.

¹⁰² In the postwar period, American Jews were returning to synagogues and community centers as points of engagement with Judaism both as a religious practice and as a cultural community. Shapiro, *A Time for Healing*. See also, Riv-Ellen Prell, "Triumph, accommodation, and resistance: American Jewish life from the end of WWII to the Six-Day War," in Marc Lee Raphael, ed., *The Columbia history of Jews and Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).

Other edits are also significant and reveal what Hadassah thought would be most appropriate for American audiences. Hadassah shortened the 75-minute *Adamah* to 45 minutes and heightened the dramatic narrative, centering the film around Benjamin, removing pedagogical elements about the children's village.¹⁰³ This focus was made most evident in the change in narration, not only from Hebrew to English, but from third to first person. The Mina Brownstone script presented the film from Benjamin's point of view, inviting the audience to enter into his world and identify with his struggle and his journey.¹⁰⁴ The opening narration suggests that Hadassah was very eager for the audience to enter into Benjamin's world as the film opens to him saying, "Come in, come in...see where I live."¹⁰⁵ As these words are said, a door opens and lets the sun into a dark room. This opening speaks directly to the audience and invites them into the settlement.

This optimism echoed broader American Jewish communal rhetoric in 1948 and was well received by American Jewish audiences, as Mrs. Kramarsky, Youth Aliyah co-chairwoman, wrote, the film "is doing us a tremendous service, not only for fundraising, but mainly as a public

¹⁰³ A letter from Dr. Lehman to Mrs. Kramarsky, dated June 2, 1949, explained, "I understand well that 'Hadassah' has been interested to shorten the film and so to give it more tension. It might occur that the pedagogical point of view will not always be adequate to that of a film." In her response, dated June 27, 1949, Kramarsky replied, "We are very happy that you seem to have liked it. We were a little afraid because we knew perfectly well that it does not do justice to your deeply spiritual picture..." Letter from Dr. Lehman to Mrs. Kramarsky, June 2, 1949, and Letter from Mrs. Kramarsky to Dr. Lehman, June 27, 1949, Box 28, Folder 208, YAP/Hadassah.

¹⁰⁴ Again, I return to Bauer's argument that in the postwar period organizations were trying to make Americans identify with the survivors in order to motivate giving and aid. Although there is also an interesting possibility that Hadassah depicted Benjamin's return to the religious community as a model for American Jews. Markus Krah has argued that *The Eternal Light* used depictions of DPs to model Judaism for American Jewish audiences. It's possible that here Hadassah offered Benjamin's story as one that American Jews could model in a return to Jewish practice and community. Bauer, *Out of the Ashes*. Markus Krah, "Role Models of Foils for American Jews? *The Eternal Light*, Displaced Persons, and the Construction of Jewishness in Mid-Twentieth-Century America" *American Jewish History* 96:4 (December 2010), 265 – 286.

¹⁰⁵ *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day*.

relations medium.”¹⁰⁶ Like the short documentary films used widely for fundraising purposes, *Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day* was shown around the country at Hadassah and community events following its premiere at the Stanley Theater in New York.¹⁰⁷ The depiction of religion and community in *Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day* better reflected American postwar values and projected an Americanized representation of survivors that was accessible to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. The non-sectarian organization Children to Palestine, Inc. thus distributed the film “with the hope that the people of America will be brought closer to these Jewish orphans who have suffered so deeply and who are prepared to take their places in a new world devoted to the ideal of the brotherhood of man.”¹⁰⁸

Despite its universal message, when the film was released in 1949, it was received in America as a story about Israel, not about the plight of survivors. The *New York Times* review, from April 11, 1949, placed the film in the context of the battles for Israel, stating that the film was “proof that the struggle in Israel is not all gunfire and diplomatic maneuver.”¹⁰⁹ Such a reception indicates how stories about survivors were not only integrated into appeals for money and connected to the urgent needs of survivors, but also related to the political concerns of the

¹⁰⁶ Letter from Mrs. Kramarsky to Dr. Lehman, June 27, 1949, Box 28, Folder 208, YAP/Hadassah.

¹⁰⁷ Many of these events were at movie theaters, not at people’s homes. The film seems to have been treated more as a feature film than an organizational film. Local chapters would rent out movie theaters to show the film. Photos of events in New York, Photo Collection, Hadassah Archive and *Hadassah Headlines*, 1948 (all issues). Apparently, the film was still played at events into the 1950s. An article in *Hadassah Headlines* from January 1952 details a showing of the film at an “inter-community” event of 200 women in Albany, NY. *Hadassah Headlines*, January 1952, HN/Hadassah.

¹⁰⁸ Introductory Title Screen, *Tomorrow’s a Wonderful Day*, Spielberg Film Archive, YouTube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9iXkhML3MHk>. The copy of the film preserved by the Spielberg Archive and viewable on YouTube must have been one distributed by Children to Palestine, Inc. as it includes these introductory titles screens. Children to Palestine was a group led by Christians in cooperation with the Youth Aliyah committee of Hadassah to rehabilitate “Jewish child victims of Nazi persecution. *Hadassah Headlines*, April 1946, HN/Hadassah.

¹⁰⁹ A.W., “‘ Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day.’”

Jewish state and part of how American Jews saw their commitment to and responsibility for the new state of Israel.

The enduring symbols of survival (1949 -1953)

In many ways, 1948 marked a moment of transition within the DP period. *The Future can be Theirs* and *Tomorrow's a Wonderful Day* both suggest that by 1948 the survivors were in a period of renewal, one that followed the period of survival and sacrifice and focused on the future, even one layered with the past. The founding of the State of Israel sparked this sense of optimism and both films celebrated the possibility of tomorrow through narratives of renewal. By 1949 and 1950, the urgency of American Jewish fundraising waned – the war in Israel had been won and the survivors in Europe were largely settled in new countries.¹¹⁰ However, Jewish crises continued to threaten Jewish lives. Beginning in 1949, UJA turned its efforts to Yemen, Iraq, North Africa, and the Eastern Bloc countries. In 1949, “Operation Magic Carpet” transported 40,000 Yemenite Jews to Israel, “Operation Ezra,” in 1950, transported Jews from North Africa, Morocco, and Egypt, and in 1951, 100,000 Iraqi Jews were flown to Israel through “Operation Open Sesame.”¹¹¹ The new heroics of American Jewish intervention would no longer

¹¹⁰ Not all survivors were out of Europe by 1950. A group of survivors known as “the Hard Core” remained under the care of JDC in Europe into the 1950s. They consisted largely of survivors who could not gain access to the US or who were too ill to move to Israel. JDC told the stories of the Hard Core in films and appeals into the early 1950s.

¹¹¹ The cover of the April 1949 *JDC Digest* featured a story about Operation Magic Carpet. The previous issue, from February 1949 marked the first time that the cover had a non-European image in the postwar period. This was a significant shift in tone and focus for JDC communications that reflected the urgency of North African efforts and the UJA-wide transition to Israel-focused work. The June 1950 cover featured map of “Operation Ezra” with Jews fleeing from Baghdad to Cyprus and Cyprus to Israel. Inside this issue was a story about Jews fleeing Kurdistan with JDC help as well as an article about the Hard Core in European DP camps. The March 1950 *UPA Reports* included a full page article about the 100,000 Jews of Iraq who had just been given permission to leave Iraq. “Operation Open Sesame” was described in a JDC Guide to Overseas Work. *JDC Digest*, February and April 1949, March 1950, YIVO Library. Dr. George Stefansky, “For 100,000 Souls, A New Lease on Life,” *UPA Reports*,

be related to Holocaust survivors, but the symbols of the Holocaust already established through the historic campaigns of 1946 and 1948 continued to resonate into the early 1950s.

The slogans of the campaigns between 1949 and 1952 demonstrate how American philanthropic attention shifted away from Europe to North Africa and Israel survival. 1949 was dubbed the “Year of Deliverance” but the year’s greatest narrative theme was homecoming as campaign materials celebrated the “Greatest Homecoming in History.” 1950 became the “Year of Emergencies” as thousands of Jews were transported from North Africa to Israel. 1951 was identified as the “Year of Progress” and 1952 became the “Year of Homemaking” as materials urged American donors to “Turn the homecoming into homemaking.” The transition of American Jewish attention in these years went from urgency to assimilation, as the concerns of immigration to Israel became the primary concern.

These slogans make clear that the narrative of world Jewry was changing dramatically with each postwar year. Yet, the language of the appeals continued to rely on familiar tropes. For example, the echo of earlier appeals is evident in a 1951 High Holiday Appeal for the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York. Local leaders and rabbis were asked to read a distributed speech during High Holiday services that called for the safety of “hundreds of thousands of still homeless Jews” and urged American Jews to donate to end the “long years of suffering and persecution” of “our brothers and sisters.”¹¹² This language recalls earlier representations of Holocaust survivors as homeless and long suffering and continued to urge the association of American Jews with the Jews of Europe. Additionally, the speech defined a “new battle of

March 1950, 7, Box 5, Folder 15, HAFP/AJA. “Guide to Overseas Operations,” Summer/Fall 1951, 31, Box 3, Folder 2, HAFP/AJA.

¹¹² “Suggested content for High Holy Day Synagogue Appeal on behalf of the Emergency campaign for Jewish children of the United Jewish Appeal of Greater New York, 1951 Campaign,” Folder 328, LZOA/YIVO.

survival”]; this time, the battle was not in Europe, Palestine, or Israel, but in North Africa: “Throughout North Africa—in the slums of Casablanca, in the hovels of Marrakech, in the ghetto of Tunis everyday constitutes a new battle for survival against poverty and disease.” This was not a complete turn away from Europe, as the appeal continued, “In war-shattered Europe, where privation is the rule, children are the worst sufferers.”¹¹³ So, by 1951, UJA had connected numerous distinct sites of Jewish suffering through established rhetoric that had worked to emotionally connect American Jewry to Jews abroad throughout the first five postwar years.

The repurposing of previous appeal language and Holocaust survivor symbols is also clear in the 1950 film, *UJA Report from Israel*. The film opens on an image of a ship pulling into a harbor as Albert Grobe narrated, “They are coming home. Home from the DP camps, home from the hovels of North Africa and the ghettos of Europe. They are coming home to Israel.”¹¹⁴ The camera then followed people getting off the ship, sorting through luggage, blankets, and strollers, and into a sprawling tent city as Grobe asked, “Where will they go?” The film was produced to shame American Jews into giving more, not based on the tragedy of the Holocaust, but on the lack of permanent housing in Israel that forced new immigrants to live in tent cities. Following the 1949 rhetoric about the “Greatest Homecoming in History,” the narration recalled the broken dreams of homecoming and the failure of American Jews to provide enough support to the exploding population of the new state.

As the camera zoomed into the tent city, the film featured images of refugees, most of whom were visibly African and not the Jews from the DP camps or ghettos of Europe.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ *UJA Report from Israel*, 1950, Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Nonetheless, the language continued to evoke the tragedy of the Holocaust. Not only did the film recall DP camps and rely on the established association between Jewish survivors and the term “refugee,” but Grobe’s narration twice made direct reference to the experience of Europe’s Jews. First, he noted ironically, “What diabolical turn of fate, they are now in camps that are worse than the camps in Germany” and then, “Once, Hitler was the enemy, now it was the sun...burning through the thin piece of canvas covering the tent.”¹¹⁵ These references were incongruous with the dark faces that populated the tent city in the film. Not until midway through *UJA Reports from Israel* is the viewer confronted with an image of a Holocaust survivor, a woman holding a small child, identifiable by the tattoo on her arm. In 1950, this symbol continued to resonate for an American Jewish public and signaled a need for fundraising as an imperative for the American Jewish community.

Conclusion

By 1953, faces of UJA appeals had changed from child survivors in Nazi Europe to the Jews from Tunisia, Morocco, Libya, Iran and Iraq. But these stories continued to pull at the heartstrings of American donors and inspire giving to UJA and across the American Jewish landscape. Although by 1953 the battles between UIA and JDC had ended and American Jews largely embraced Zionism, American Jewish philanthropy remained broad in focus as the primary site of Jewish need shifted from Europe to Israel to North Africa and the Middle East. Throughout this short period, stories of survivors and the symbols of the Holocaust continued to resonate as powerful signifiers of tragedy, suffering, and need and the malleability of survivor

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

identities enabled the unprecedented success of American Jewish fundraising in the postwar period. Multiple survivor representations reflected the new boundaries of the postwar Jewish world and established motifs that would endure as symbols of the Holocaust. Yet, postwar Jewish fundraising narratives also shaped stories about American Jews as the saviors of their brethren abroad, fashioning survival and sacrifice as reciprocal demands that reimagined American Jews as the bearers of hope for the Jewish future, an idea that will be further explored in the next chapter.

So, in fact, the use of survivor experiences in emotional financial appeals did not flatten the stories of Jews under Nazism. Rather, they multiplied survivor representations and transformed survivors into refugees, Pioneers, and New Americans with renewed spiritual strength. Significantly, the stories that created a sense of identification and prompted generous giving from American Jews revealed little detail about Jewish experiences under Nazism, focusing instead on the postwar suffering of Jews, which American Jewish philanthropy could alleviate. These early survivor representations were thus fashioned according to the possibilities for American Jewish intervention abroad and relied on traditional Jewish stories, like that of Passover, to depict Jewish experiences under and after Nazism. Nonetheless, the audacity of postwar American Jewish fundraising reveals the significant interest, compassion, and concern American Jews felt for the surviving Jews of Europe and serves as an important site for understanding how American Jews acted in response to the Holocaust.

3.

Saving our Survivors: Used Clothes in the Postwar Battle for Peace

On May 16, 1948, nearly one million pounds of used clothing were collected in Boston, Massachusetts as part of a house-to-house canvas of the Supplies for Overseas Survivors (SOS) program.¹ SOS, a program of the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), collected used clothes, canned goods, and other material items for the surviving Jews of Europe and the 1948 Boston collection was the largest one-day campaign in the three-year history of the program. The event inspired 35,000 families (nearly every Jewish family in the Greater Boston area) to donate an average of 30 pounds of clothes each and mobilized 15,000 men, women, and children as door-to-door volunteers (the greatest number of volunteers for any single effort in the history of the Boston Jewish Community).² Given the overwhelming participation for this campaign, it is not surprising that the appeal exceeded its goal by nearly two-fold, filling 24 railroad boxcars instead of 15 that were sent directly to Europe.³

¹ The Boston campaign collected 938,000 pounds of supplies. SOS Executive Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY.

² SOS Executive Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY. Letter from Sidney S. Cohen to Mr. Robert Dolins, May 27, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY. Yehuda Bauer also notes the success of Boston's SOS campaign in 1948. Yehuda Bauer, *Out of the Ashes: The Impact of American Jews on Post-Holocaust European Jewry*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1989).

³ Goal of 15 boxcars: "The Campaigner," Boston, MA, April 9, 1948, 45/54, #1334, JDC-NY; total of 24 boxcars: SOS Executive Meeting Minutes, June 15, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY.

Similar SOS campaigns were conducted in nearly 1,000 communities across the country and many similarly surpassed their collection quotas.⁴ As a result, between January 1946 and December 1949, SOS collected 26,000,000 pounds of relief goods, sending to Europe 14,000,000 pounds of food, 11,000,000 pounds of clothes (including 3,000,000 pounds of layette materials), more than 1,000,000 medical drug items, thousands of religious items and over 170,000 toys – enough for each surviving Jewish child to have one.⁵ The enthusiasm for SOS and used clothing collection in Boson serves as a starting point for examining SOS and the ways in which anonymous donations introduced American Jews to stories about the Holocaust and Jewish survivors.

Collecting as a response to war was not a new philanthropic project of American Jewish organizations. JDC collected and distributed material goods to Jews in the wake of World War I and American Jews continued do so throughout World War II by supporting Russian War Relief efforts.⁶ Nor was this a unique response to the end of World War II. The United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) sponsored a similar collection campaign in April 1944, the United National Clothing Collection (UNCC), that mobilized 18,000 communities

⁴ Robert Dolins, “Everybody’s Campaign,” “Three Years of Achievement,” SOS Bulletin 8:1 (April 1949), 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

⁵ “Three Years of Achievement,” SOS Bulletin 8:1, April 1949, AR 45/54, File 1345, JDC-NY and “SOS Collected over 26,300,000 Pounds of Relief Supplies During Past Three Years,” April 11, 1949, JTA online archive, <http://archive.jta.org/article/1949/04/11/3018175/sos-collected-over-26300-pounds-of-relief-supplies-during-past-three-years>.

⁶ See Oscar Handlin, *A Continuing Task: The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1914–1964* (New York: Random House, 1964) and Yehuda Bauer, *My Brother’s Keeper: a history of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, 1929 – 1939* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1974). Deborah Dash Moore also cites the efforts of American Jews in support of the Russian War Relief in a list of ways American Jews responded to news about the Holocaust during the war. Deborah Dash Moore, “When Jews were GIs: How World War II changed a generation and remade American Jewry,” *American Jewish Identity Politics*, Deborah Dash Moore, ed. (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), 33.

across the country to collect over 150,000,000 pounds of clothing.⁷ This effort was so successful that another nation wide campaign was launched at the end of the war and the Victory Clothing Collection amassed nearly 100,000,000 pieces of clothing in January 1946.

Thus, this chapter examines the project of SOS not as a novel approach to Jewish philanthropy, but as an American Jewish response to the Holocaust that reflected broader American values and the rhetoric of the early Cold War. I rely on publicity materials from the UNCC as important comparative markers to consider how SOS translated ideas about consumerism and unity for American Jewish audiences and to trace how the collection of used clothes and canned food was transformed into a powerful weapon of peace. SOS not only adapted American tropes for Jewish audiences, but also connected American Jews with the surviving Jews in Europe and, in constructing appeals to benefit survivors, represented American Jews as saviors of a Jewish future.

The story of SOS invites additional questions about the applicability of American values as a narrative frame for stories about the Holocaust. As the example of the Boston campaign makes clear, SOS quantified their success by number of train cars. Were the leaders aware that this form of counting echoed the way Nazis had accounted for Jewish victims being sent to concentration camps? An SOS film, documenting the 1948 campaign in Rochester, NY, introduced trains as a central visual motif for SOS and showed bundles of used clothes and piles of shoes as other symbols SOS relied on to convey their message.⁸ In the film, young volunteers

⁷ Announcement from Dan West, June 19, 1945, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, Collection of Coordinating Committee of National Jewish Organizations for the United National Clothing Collection for War Relief (CC-UNCC), AJHS, and “News for Chairmen,” February 11, 1946, Microfilm Reel PI/1, Side 1, Folder: Victory Clothing Collection, Press Releases, UNRRA Records, Columbia University Rare Books and Manuscript Division.

⁸ The film was shot in color and edited to be used educationally, to “graphically” portray “the most approved methods for carrying through a drive,” but it was never finished or distributed. Untitled Rochester SOS film, YIVO

organized large mounds of clothes, packed boxes of canned food, and loaded freight cars with bundles. The film then featured thirty seconds of footage of a loaded train moving down the tracks with the caption, “130,000 pounds of life and hope on its way to JDC.”⁹ In this way, trains both literally transported needed materials across the Atlantic and became symbols of hope and friendship extended from American Jews to those still in Europe. How did American Jews read these images in the postwar period and how did representations of the Holocaust find meaning in cultural assertions of hope and progress?

To uncover the multiplicity of meanings embedded in these symbols, this chapter first explores the formation of SOS alongside the UNCC. Although the scale of the projects was vastly different, both sought to convert the success of mass philanthropy during the war into collection programs in the postwar.¹⁰ These efforts enabled Americans to participate in worldwide rehabilitation after the war and asserted American influence through humanitarian aid. The first section of the chapter considers these goals and the challenges of conducting philanthropic work that promoted benefits for society at home and abroad. The chapter then explores three specific postwar themes that defined the public rhetoric of both SOS and UNCC: consumerism, consensus, and the Cold War. The first of these three themes sheds light on the roles women played as the founders of SOS and important donors for both programs. Calls for the donation of material home goods directed women to return to their traditional roles as shoppers and

Film Archive. The planning and filming was discussed in the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, May 6, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY.

⁹ Untitled Rochester SOS Film, YIVO Film Archive.

¹⁰ For more about the 20th Century transition to mass philanthropy see Scott M. Cutlip, *Fundraising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1965) and Merle Curti, “American philanthropy and the National Character,” *American Quarterly*, 10:4, Winter 1958, 420-437. For a more recent assessment, see Olivier Zunz *Philanthropy in America: A History*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2012).

homemakers and marked the postwar period as one of consumption. The next section explores Wendy Wall's assessment of consensus as an American value in the postwar period and the place of public programming in popularizing this "American way."¹¹ Both SOS and UNCC boasted partnerships and broad participation that engaged all members of society and thus celebrated philanthropy as a point of unity. The chapter then considers the emergence of the early Cold War, in which used clothing and canned foods became weapons for peace and collection projects like UNCC and SOS served as avenues for sending friendship abroad.

In this postwar battle, philanthropy became an important expression of American patriotism and SOS allowed American Jews to display their American loyalty and Jewishness at the same time. As such, representations of survivors through SOS publicity were inflected with American rhetoric about peace, friendship, and hope, themes which became embedded in symbols of the Holocaust, including trains, shoes and clothes. These material objects, which have become iconic references to the dehumanization and loss of the Holocaust, held multiple symbolic meanings in the immediate aftermath of the war. The final section of this chapter thus grapples with the layered meanings of collecting, transporting, and disseminating material aid to Holocaust survivors in the postwar period as a way of complicating the creation of early Holocaust iconography.

Mass collection as a response to war

¹¹ Wendy Wall, *Inventing the "American Way": The Politics of Consensus from the New Deal to the Civil Rights Movement* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Supplies for Overseas Survivors was founded in late 1945 through the initiative of several New York Jewish Women's organizations including Hadassah, National Council for Jewish Women, Mizrahi Women's Organization of America, and the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods, among others.¹² The political and religious diversity of these women attest to the immediate interest of American Jews (and American Jewish women in particular) to help the surviving Jews of Europe through material aid. The project, led by Blanche Gilman, announced a goal of 20,000,000 pounds of clothing, medicine, household and comfort items, layettes, and toys through personal donations and during 1946, collected five million pounds of supplies.¹³ The initial appeal letter called on American Jews to help "our suffering brethren overseas" and SOS publicity materials portrayed American Jews as the "lifeline" for Europe's Jewish survivors (Figure 4).¹⁴ In this way, SOS, like fundraising campaigns throughout the postwar period, depicted American Jews as the saviors of European Jews, the crucial line of support that could save Jewish lives and preserve the Jewish future.

¹² Bauer states that 16 women's groups joined to first launch SOS. A press release from November 25, 1945 sent by the JDC cites eight initial women's groups that led the charge, including Hadassah, the women's Zionist Organization of America; the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds; Mizrahi Women's Organization of America; Women's Division of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregation of America; National Women's League of the United Synagogue of America; National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods; National Council of Jewish Women; National Jewish Welfare Board; Federation of Jewish Women's Organizations; Women's Supreme Council of B'nai B'rith; and the Ladies Auxiliary, Jewish War Veterans of the United States. By November 1946, 16 women's groups had joined the effort according to a press release from November 8, 1946. Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xxi. "JDC Calls for contributions from National Groups," press release, November 25, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY. "Three Years of Achievement" repeats the praise of 17 Women's organizations. "Three Years of Achievement," AR 45/54, File 1345, JDC-NY.

¹³ "Former Governor Herbert H. Lehman addresses opening rally of JDC's SOS (Supplies for Overseas Survivors) Collection Fall Drive in New York," press release, September 20, 1946, and "Special Fall Food Campaign of JDC's SOS Collection," press release, October 11, 1946, Reel 110, IS 4/2, JDC Archive, Jerusalem (JDC-J), USHMM Archival Branch.

¹⁴ "Lifeline to Europe," Brochure, 45/54, #1339, JDC-NY.

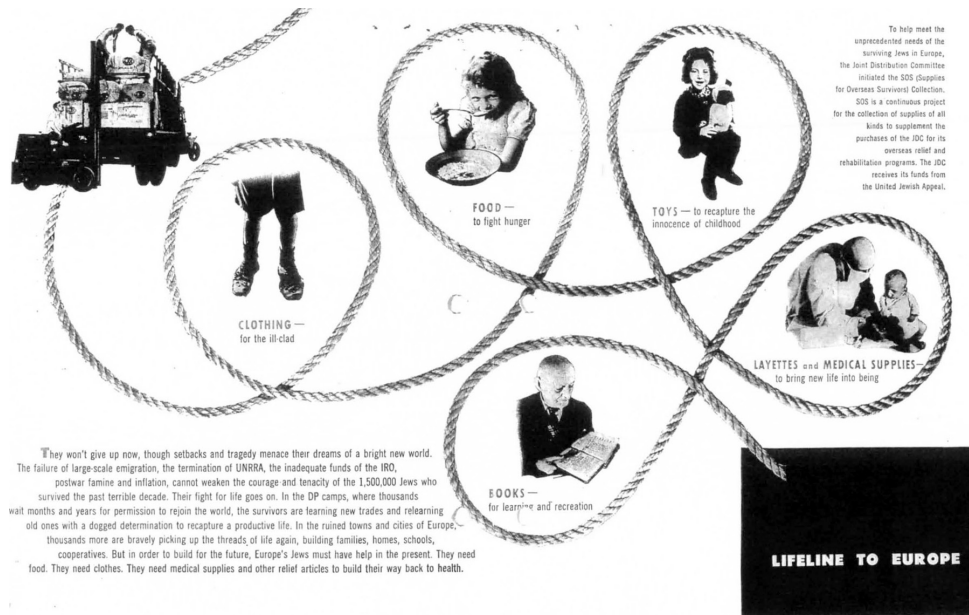


Figure 4: American Jews served as the “lifeline” for Europe’s surviving Jews by providing clothing, food, toys, books, and medical supplies through SOS.

“Lifeline to Europe,” Brochure, 45/54, #1339, JDC-NY. Courtesy of the JDC Archive, New York.

SOS offered American Jews a way to aid survivors abroad outside formal fundraising campaigns and emboldened American Jews to believe they were the only hope for world Jewry. As the initial appeal letter for SOS asserted:

You can save Jewish lives and rebuild hope from the rubble of despair. Food and knitted items, medicines and comfort goods, layette and toys are the means... Through your help it will be possible to... provide milk for newly-born Jewish babies and children, to put toys in the hands of Jewish orphans, and to bring smiles of hope and courage back to the faces of hundreds of thousands in Poland, Rumania, France and almost every other country of the continent.¹⁵

This idea — that the donation of material goods could save lives and build hope — was repeated in all SOS publicity materials and events so that the posters, pamphlets, and oral appeals that

¹⁵ Preliminary Announcement Letter, November 15, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY.

promoted the project depicted American Jews as saviors alongside lists of needed goods and images of destitute survivors.

By 1947, JDC took over management of the program, replaced Blanche Gilman with Robert Dolins as SOS Director, established SOS committees across the country with explicit collection quotas, and set up transportation and storage infrastructure that could better manage the collection process. Yet, the central ambitions of the project remained the same; SOS sought to raise 20,000,000 pounds of materials and continued to paint American Jews as the lifeline of Europe's survivors. To achieve these goals, leaders, volunteers, and JDC professionals constructed a nation-wide organizational and logistical network that advertised, collected, sorted, bundled, transported, and stored material goods on local, regional, and national levels. The clothing, knitted items, food, and other goods reflected donations of all size — including bags of used clothes from individual donors, canned food from Jewish school drives, and millions of pounds of new goods from manufacturers, grocers, and department stores.¹⁶

The materials goods collected through SOS were shipped to Europe and dispersed to Jewish survivors in DP camps in Germany, as well as in Western Europe, Poland, Hungary, and wherever JDC offices operated. These needed supplies of food and clothing were distributed as part of allotted food quotas or, as was more often the case, to supplement the quota of clothing and food allotted by UNRRA, the IRO, or the U.S. Army. As Paul Baerwald, Chairman of JDC in 1945, explained, “For some time now, it has been obvious that the large monetary relief program which the JDC has been conducting will have to be supplemented by a material aid

¹⁶ In 1948, Dolins initiated an alternate network through an industrial gifts-in-kind campaign that exponentially increased the scale of donations, shifted the focus from used to new items, and eventually accounted for 15% of all materials distributed by JDC abroad. Initial Letter to Trade and Industry, SOS Manual, September 1948, 45/54, #1344, JDC-NY; Editorial by Fred A. Stern, July 23, 1948, 45/54, #1344, JDC-NY. Reference is also made to the Trade and Industry efforts in the Rochester SOS film.

project if we are to meet the most serious needs of the Jews who have survived the last terrible years in Europe.”¹⁷ Raphael Levy, Publicity Director at JDC, underscored this urgent need, noting in an internal memo that “in 1945 the JDC appropriated \$28,000,000 but that this was insufficient.”¹⁸ So, the materials goods, clothing, food, and medicines collected through SOS and sent to DP camps by JDC were necessary elements of postwar humanitarian aid for survivors that supplemented, rather than competed with, financial support.

The efforts of UNCC similarly engaged a mass network of volunteers to collect used clothes, including national leadership, organizational liaisons, regional committee leaders, and local volunteers, but the network of the UNCC reached well beyond that of SOS, engaging over 18,000 communities from the smallest towns in rural America to the farthest reaches of Alaska and Hawaii. The distribution network was equally as vast, benefitting not Jewish survivors, but “war victims” in Europe, China, the Philippines, and beyond. As this reach suggests, the UNCC was a marvel of organization, relying on networks of leaders established by war time bond sales and the reach of the U.S. Military around the world.

First announced on March 1, 1945, two months before VE day, the UNCC collection effort lasted from April 1 to 30, 1945 and, in that one month period, collected over 150,000,000 million pounds of clothing. The project was led nationally by chairman, Henry J. Kaiser and organized through the agencies registered with the President’s War Relief Control Board, including Jewish institutions, union groups, churches, rotary clubs, scouting groups, and political

¹⁷ Letter from Paul Baerwald to Mrs. Anna Rosenberg, October 31, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY.

¹⁸ Memo from Raphael Levy to Louis H. Sobel, November 14, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY.

associations.¹⁹ This top-down organization tapped Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish groups to collect and ship used clothing, relying on religious institutions as traditional sites of American philanthropic work. To reach beyond these traditional avenues of giving, the UNCC also sought the support of social, cultural, and political groups, sending publicity through a seemingly indiscriminate and exhaustive list of organizations.²⁰ Among hundreds of groups that promoted UNCC giving were the Philharmonic-Symphony, American Retail Federation, Needlework Guild of America, American Legion, United States Department of Agriculture, the National Women's Trade Union League, the Camp Fire Girls, and the Boy Scouts.²¹

JDC organized the efforts of Jewish organizations for UNCC, coordinating the efforts by the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Women's American ORT, B'nai B'rith and the National Council of Jewish Women, among others.²² Working as part of a united force for UNCC presented a strong Jewish community and allowed American Jews to demonstrate their patriotism through Jewish philanthropy as Jews could participate in UNCC and still make sure survivors overseas were taken care of. Louis Sobel, chairman of the Jewish Coordinating Committee of UNCC negotiated for Jews in Europe and secured 2.5 million pounds of collected

¹⁹ The President's War Relief Control Board had been established in 1942 to regulate wartime fundraising and monitor overseas aid. Jewish organizations working to aid Jews in Nazi Europe were all registered under the War Relief Control Board.

²⁰ The transition from religious to secular forms of philanthropy was part of the move to mass philanthropy in the early 20th Century. Merle Curti, "Forward," in Scott M. Cutlip, *Fundraising in the United States: Its Role in America's Philanthropy* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1965) xii.

²¹ UNCC/LOC.

²² The full list of participating Jewish organizations included: the American Associate for Jewish Education, American Committee of OSE, American Jewish Congress Women's Division, Women's American ORT, B'nai B'rith, Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds, Hadassah, Junior Hadassah, HIAS, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish War Veterans of the United States and Women's Auxiliary, JDC Junior Division, National Council of Jewish Women, National Jewish Welfare Board, Synagogue Council of America, and Mizrahi Women's Organization of America. JDC Announcement from Chairman, Louis H. Sobel, Box 1, Folder 1: "Special Information for local Communities," CC-UNCC/AJHS.

clothing to be distributed to the Jews of Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary, where UNRAA did not operate.²³ Sobel's effort in this regard illustrates American Jewish interest in survivors and their assertion of Jewishness even in an American context.

The April '45 collection was so successful that President Truman urged UNRRA leaders to hold a second drive after the war ended in the East. Truman again turned to Henry Kaiser to lead what was called the Victory Clothing Collection for Overseas Relief – a drive that lasted from January 7 – 30, 1946 and articulated its goals not by pounds, but by number of clothing items, aiming to collect 100,000,000 pieces. Additionally, the second drive asked donors to include short notes of friendship and hope along with the clothing, a Cold War strategy that will be explored later in the chapter.

This massive collection effort was also inspired by the need for material items to supplement established efforts abroad. UNRRA Administrators felt confident they could fill commitments for food and vital commodities, but they would have to use “used clothes as a stop measure gap.”²⁴ The worldwide textile shortage prevented Europeans from making new clothes and mass destruction across the continent (and around the world) slowed down production and manufacturing. While the administrators recognized that collecting used clothes from America was “not the perfect answer to this dilemma, it was something.”²⁵ As such, both UNCC and SOS were implemented to supplement American-led aid abroad and constructed networks of giving that allowed Americans to participate in postwar rehabilitation through the donation of used

²³ Letter from Louis H. Sobel, August 30, 1945, Box 1, Folder: Correspondence, CC-UNCC/AJHS.

²⁴ “Comments upon the history of clothing drives prepared by Dorothy Clark, of the Office of Chief Historian and Archivist,” Reel H/6, Side 2, Folder: Comments on the History of Clothing Drives, UNRRA/Columbia.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

clothes, canned foods, and other home goods. Like SOS, UNCC also urged their donors to recognize their own potential as saviors. The ubiquitous slogan of both the UNCC and Victory Collection was: “What can *you* spare that they can wear?” Just as UJA fundraising sought to make American Jewish donors feel like only they could save Jews abroad, publicity materials for the nation-wide clothing drives crafted a reciprocal relationship between Americans and “war victims” around the world. Only if Americans gave generously could the rest of the world receive the necessary goods for rebuilding life after the devastation of war.

The reality of sending millions of pounds of clothes and food from America to Europe faced some initial hurdles. Memos to SOS from European depots complained that the clothes were not appropriate for DP camp life. In particular, the SOS workers of Europe offered sharp criticism that high-heeled shoes, gowns, and fur coats were unsuitable. Adele Levy, chairman of the UJA National Women’s Division, reported that, upon visiting one JDC sponsored children’s home in Paris, there were “long rows of tiny fur coats.”²⁶ She wrote, “They were coats which the furriers guild of Paris had contributed...it was somewhat incongruous to see these tiny tots running around in fur coats and shoes that were full of holes.” UNCC faced the same challenge in reference to donations of fur coats. Anticipating these kinds of problems, UNCC included a note in some of their advertisements that “evening dresses, tuxedos, and dress suits cannot be used.”²⁷ Nonetheless, a fur dealer donated twelve coats to UNCC and, while the organization

²⁶ Adele Levy, *Our Child Survivors*, (New York: United Jewish Appeal, 1946), YIVO library.

²⁷ Advertisement in the *New Orleans Item*, April 9, 1945 (among others), vol 2, part 5, UNCC/LOC.

publicly celebrated the generosity of the gift, internal memos detailed a debate about how to deal with the coats that resulted in their discreet sale for additional aid money.²⁸

For SOS, complaints from Europe revealed disappointment beyond Levy's sense of "incongruousness." In fact, reports from aid workers suggest that donations worked against the SOS intention to send hope to survivors. As Yehuda Bauer wrote, "Some complaints spoke of the self-esteem of Jewish survivors being undermined by such gifts. One must, however, understand that that was not the spirit in which these things were sent. People in Ohio, Brooklyn, or Seattle had no clear picture of the life of Jews in Europe or Shanghai, and sent what they could spare, and felt proud doing so."²⁹ It was in this spirit that the furrier guild of Paris generously sent warm coats to young child survivors, but the dissonance between survivor needs and collected materials reflected a lack of understanding among American donors about the experience of survivors in postwar Europe.

Other problems that SOS and UNCC faced further reveal tensions between donor interests, recipient expectations, and the transmission of knowledge about the Holocaust. For UNCC, the process of bundling and shipping the clothes was delayed by the amount of mending necessary to make the donated clothing wearable. The process was so behind schedule that UNCC missed its first winter delivery deadline and an UNRRA executive suggested donations could be used as rags rather than distributing them as clothes.³⁰ Eventually, UNCC decided to

²⁸ Memo from Dan West to financial advisor, January 12, 1946, Reel GC/3, Folder: Clothing Collection Drive, UNRRA/Columbia.

²⁹ Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xxi.

³⁰ A cable sent to European Countries, August 1945 stated, "We believe everything sent can be used. Small percentage may be rags and remnants, but these may be used as shoddy in woolen mills." As quoted in Historical summary, 11, Reel H/6, Folder: BS CL 6 Comments on the History of Clothing Drives, UNRRA/Columbia.

increase efficiency by sending the clothes without mending or cleaning.³¹ SOS also sent damaged clothing to DP camps and established workshops that employed skilled seamstresses to mend the donations.³² Additionally, SOS changed its collection policies to favor new items from clothing manufacturers and distributors and asked individuals to donate new clothes and shoes.³³ Although publicity materials stressed the need for wearable clothing, women were also encouraged to “clean out their closets,” an act that contradicted the demand for new items. These issues suggest that UNCC and SOS sometimes served as dumping spots for old items rather than collection sites for needed goods.

These initial challenges were quickly sorted out and by 1947, SOS had a much better record for sending wearable goods, but these hiccups still raise an important question: what kind of knowledge did SOS transmit about survivors and how did the project serve to convey the needs of Jewish survivors to American donors? That SOS explicitly identified “survivors” as the recipients of aid, and of American Jewish attention, is important. The publicity of the program suggests that American Jews were not shy about promoting the needs of survivors, identifying them as Jews, or signaling the particular experience of European Jews under Nazism. Certainly, “Overseas Survivors” indicated Jews as a specific group in a way that “war victims,” the

³¹ Ultimately, the UNRRA historian noted, that “requests for larger quantities of contributed clothing were in fact the most real gestures of appreciation received from overseas.” Apparently all locations that received bundled clothing requested more and they did not need to change policies other than expediting the organization in the US. Ibid.

³² Image of women at sewing machines with the caption: “11,000,000 pounds of SOS used clothing helped end the days of nakedness. Skilled workers repaired and remodeled garments.” “Three Years of Achievement,” Final issue of SOS Bulletin, 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

³³ A memo sent from the Germany JDC office on June 4, 1948 claims that the shoes sent to Berlin are “useless” and asks that used shoes stop being sent. Memo, June 4, 1948, 45/54, #1332, JDC-NY. On September 7, 1948, Mr. Edward M. M. Warburg sent a “personal message” to all SOS Chairmen, Leaders, and Volunteers stating that “no used clothing and no used shoes should be collected.” Three days later, Robert Dolins sent a formal memo to SOS Committee Chairmen and Contributing Committees, repeating, “No used clothing, no used shoes” should be collected in the Fall 1948 campaign. At the same time, new clothing and shoes were both listed as priorities for the Trade and Industry committee. Memo from Robert Dolins, June 7, 1948, 45/54, #1331, JDC-NY.

recipients of UNCC goods, did not. Additionally, American Jewish leaders took seriously their role as heroes to the survivors, often altering the initials of SOS to refer to “our survivors.” The use of “our” as the central pronoun conveyed a sense of common identity that was woven into all aspects of SOS work. At the January 1948 SOS annual dinner, Gilman drew out this idea. Her emotional speech evoked “our displaced persons,” “our second remnant,” “our people,” “our 40,000 souls,” and “our overseas survivors.”³⁴ In this way, her speech catalogued some of the nomenclature used about survivors at this period and underscored how American Jews understood their role in aiding Jews abroad.

For many American Jews, the use of personal pronouns reflected real family relationships, so that the idea of “our survivors” was, for American Jewry, both a personal and a collective idea. And, one that was used in communal materials outside the SOS context, notably in the title of Adele Levy’s 1946 UJA report, *Our Child Survivors*, which argued that the future of the Jewish people rested with American Jewish action by stating that American Jews had the power to “finish Hitler’s work” if they did not “make sacrifices to assure [survivors] that they will never again be subjected to the horror and sorrows of the past decade.”³⁵ For Levy, the answer was through giving to the \$100,000,000 1946 UJA Campaign, but the sentiment resonated throughout SOS campaigns so that representations of survivors were depicted through the frame of American Jewish action. The images of survivors in *Our Child Survivors* and SOS publicity worked to highlight the needs of survivors, but still did not convey specific stories or details about Jewish life under Nazism. While the representations of survivors were meant to inspire, they communicated little about what it meant to be a survivor.

³⁴ Letter from Mrs. Louis H. Dreier, read by Mrs. Blanche Gilman at January 3, 1948 SOS Dinner. Transcript of Dinner proceedings, 45/54, #1343, JDC-NY.

³⁵ Levy, *Our Child Survivors*.

UNCC publicity similarly included photographs of victims, often relying on images of children to provoke an emotional response from donors. Across the country the same images were printed in UNCC advertisements: children with dirty faces, dressed only in rags, from Greece, Yugoslavia, China, and the Philippines. The faces of these young children represented the devastation of war and begged for help that could only come from America. Concentration camp victims were also represented, but not specifically as Jews. Rather, the symbols of the concentration camp, well understood in postwar America, identified Displaced Persons from “all nationalities.”³⁶ A *Time* magazine article from January 14, 1946 serves as an example. The article featured an image of concentration camp survivors in their stripped prison uniforms behind barbed wire; the caption read: “Memo to the US: With a feeling that some Americans had already begun to forget the war, the committee in charge of the Victory Clothing Collection last week sent out this picture of prisoners liberated from a German Concentration camp at Ebensee, in the Austrian Tirol. To help clothe them and 300 million other war starvelings, the Victory Collection needs 10,000,000 garments, plus shoes and bedding.”³⁷ These generic representations of war victims conveyed the urgency of clothing collection, but did not transmit any details about personal experiences during or after the war.

Nonetheless, the success of both UNCC and SOS to mobilize Americans in response to the tragedies of World War II through anonymous donations of clothes, food, and material goods suggest that their messaging resonated across the country. In particular, the assertion that Americans acted as necessary saviors of the postwar world constructed narratives about “war

³⁶ Victory Clothing Collection, Bulletin 1: General Information, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC.

³⁷ *Time*, January 14, 1946, Vol 2, part 4, UNCC/LOC. The same image was featured in a press proof designed by UNCC and a note attached explained that the proof was sent directly to newspapers. Radio Kit, December 1945, 6, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC.

victims” that were destitute and waiting for American intervention. This kind of reciprocal narrative also defined Jewish survivors and reveals how American Jews acted in accord with American society in donating such goods. Yet, did the extraordinary needs of Jewish survivors abroad demand a greater responsibility among American Jews? The next three sections of the chapter will explore the motivations of American Jews who participated in SOS and the ways in which SOS publicity appropriated American tropes in the postwar period.

Women, Home goods, and Postwar Consumerism

The diverse coalition of women’s groups that first founded the SOS campaign reflected the desire of American Jewish women to send food, clothing, knitted items, and other necessities to the survivors.³⁸ Women had long contributed to American Jewish philanthropy abroad as members of women’s organizations, such as Hadassah and the National Council for Jewish Women, and women’s committees at synagogues, but through SOS, women across the country became local leaders of JDC committees not delineated by gender.³⁹ The role of women as the founders and leaders of the SOS project was significant and pointed to new possibilities for

³⁸ Politically, both Zionists and non-Zionists were members of these organizations. Hadassah was the largest Zionist organization in the country while National Council for Jewish Women remained politically neutral during this period. Religiously, Orthodox women were members of both the Mizrahi Women’s Organization of American and the Orthodox Jewish Congregations Women’s Division. NCJW, meanwhile, comprised of mostly Reform Jewish women. For more about the political impact of American Jewish Women, see the collected essays in Shulamit Reinharz and Mark A. Raider, *American Jewish Women and the Zionist Enterprise* (Waltham, Mass: Brandeis University Press, 2005), particularly the essays in Part II: American Jewish Women’s Organizations and the Zionist Enterprise, 71 – 184.

³⁹ For more about the power of women in philanthropy and the exertion of power through philanthropy, see Kathleen D. McCarthy, “Parallel Power Structures: Women and the Voluntary Space,” in *Lady Bountiful Revisited: Women, Philanthropy and Power*, Kathleen D. McCarthy, ed., (New Brunswick and London: Rutgers University Press, 1990) 1-31.

women to become leaders in Jewish communal life outside the spheres of auxiliary committees.⁴⁰ Yet, SOS continued to appeal to women through traditional roles as consumers and homemakers. Religious and secular, members of Zionist and non-Zionist groups, Jewish women across the American Jewish landscape sought to help Jews in Europe through traditional activities – namely making, purchasing, and collecting household goods like food and clothes. Rendering humanitarian aid through consumerist terms in this way reflected a broader trend in American Jewish philanthropy. According to Jeffrey Shandler, Jewish consumerism in the early twentieth century took on philanthropic possibilities when buying Jewish products became a way to support the *Yishuv* and he notes that Jewish women in particular invested in Zionism by buying wine, almonds, and cigarettes.⁴¹

Jewish women also saw SOS as a way to convert their skills and previous involvement in Jewish philanthropy into a response to the Holocaust. They created “Help-a-Chaplain” Committees that collected materials requested by Rabbis overseas; identified items specifically needed by women; formed knitting circles and crafted layettes for newborn Jewish babies; and transformed Russian War Relief work into SOS collection.⁴² As Mrs. Benjamin Diamond of the

⁴⁰ The final SOS Bulletin stated that SOS allowed new Jewish leaders to emerge, “especially among the women and youth.” This final bulletin also repeated thanks to the 17 central women’s groups who led the SOS effort. “Three Years of Achievement,” 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

⁴¹ Jeffrey Shandler, “*Di Toyre fun Skhoyre*, or, I Shop therefore I am: The Consumer Cultures of American Jews,” Gideon Reuveni and Nils H. Roemer, *Longing, Belonging, and the Making of Jewish Consumer Culture*, (Leiden: Brill, 2010) 183 – 200, 188-89.

⁴² Many letters document the influence of chaplains in activating women’s networks of philanthropy: Letter from Mrs. Alfred R. Bachrach, National Jewish Welfare Board, to Louis H. Sobel, November 7, 1945, 45/54, #1270, JDC-NY. Mrs. Bachrach noted, “Women’s Division has been asked by Jewish chaplains and by our workers in Europe to try to provide small items...for women in the civilian communities of the liberated countries...” Mrs. Anne Cohen, Chairman of Help-a-Chaplain committee of the Cleveland Jewish Center Sisterhood, wrote to Mr. Goldhamer of the Jewish Welfare Federation of Cleveland, OH, “A group of women from our Sisterhood of the Cleveland Jewish Center recently undertook to send used clothing and food to Italy and Germany in response to repeated urgent pleas from army chaplains in Europe.” Letter from Mrs. Anne Cohen to Mr. Goldhamer, November 1, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY.

Bronx expressed in a letter accompanying her donation, she had “done a fine job for the Russian War Relief” and “while the need is great there also, I feel that I owe it to my people to direct some of my energies thusly, now.”⁴³ By this, Mrs. Diamond meant that she would now support the European Jews, turning her prior experience collecting material aid to the most urgent need in the postwar Jewish world. In these ways, women responded to the postwar need for material goods through traditional channels of philanthropy, continuing the models of war relief on which the JDC was founded.

These modes of engagement – based on the collection and creation of material goods – enabled a form of giving that felt more personal than giving money. Mrs. Alfred Bachrach, of the National Jewish Welfare Board, articulated this kind of personalized giving by describing the collection project as one based on “relationships and correspondence that will be developed between the groups in this country and groups of women in the cities of the liberated countries.”⁴⁴ According to Bachrach these intentions best reflected the interests of Jewish women around the country and could benefit Jews at home and abroad by providing American Jews the satisfaction of relationship building and European survivors spiritual and emotional uplift. The following chapter examines letter-writing campaigns that fulfilled Bachrach’s call for morale building and further explores the interest of American Jewish women to respond to the Holocaust through emotional support alongside material support.

However, when JDC took over the management process of SOS, the intention to build relationships between American Jews and survivors through SOS was never realized. Instead,

⁴³ Letter from Mrs. Benjamin Diamond, October 18, 1945, 45/54, #1270, JDC-NY.

⁴⁴ Letter from Mrs. Alfred R. Bachrach, National Jewish Welfare Board, to Louis H. Sobel, November 7, 1945, 45/54, #1270, JDC-NY.

JDC streamlined the process of collecting, organizing, shipping and distributing used clothes and material goods in order to amplify the program's capacity and efficiency. Dolins explained that although "there is a certain amount of psychological value to the giver, and in turn to a campaign, where the individual sends directly to another individual or institution...experience has shown that this value is far outweighed by the greater returns from a central campaign effort."⁴⁵ In this way, Dolins' recognized the interest of American Jewish women to give directly to survivors, but argued that gifts could have the most impact as part of a large scale campaign.⁴⁶ Dolins further articulated how SOS could fulfill both needs, writing, "In addition, the SOS campaign itself has a good bit of that personal touch since the contributor is giving actual goods and not impersonal cash."⁴⁷ Women interested in giving to individuals could still feel the warmth of giving specific items rather than money and JDC could most effectively manage the distribution process.

As a result, JDC transformed the interest of women's groups to knit, buy, give, and send necessary material goods to individual survivors into a large scale, anonymous collection campaign. Such a transformation relied on women as consumers and home makers more so than women as leaders and organizers, although women continued to play leadership roles in SOS locally and nationally. This was especially true in women's groups, like the National Federation of Temple Sisterhoods (NFTS). Ruth Litin, the SOS chair for NFTS, honored the role women played through SOS by painting American Jewish women as modern-day Esthers in honor of

⁴⁵ Draft Statement by Robert Dolins, March 5, 1948, 45/54, #1335, JDC-NY.

⁴⁶ The position of JDC to minimize individual giving in favor of overall aid is further explored in the next chapter.

⁴⁷ Draft Statement by Robert Dolins, March 5, 1948, 45/54, #1335, JDC-NY.

Purim.⁴⁸ She wrote: “If there is any festival that glorifies the woman in Israel, it is Purim. We recall with pride, Esther, the Queen, the savior of her people. Today, with our SOS campaign...we are enacting a similar role.”⁴⁹ Litin may have overestimated the role Americans played in saving the Jewish people through clothing and food collection, but if she did, she certainly did so within the scale of other SOS public statements and also translated a broader American narrative into Jewish terms.

UNCC similarly recognized the potential of women as consumers and, thus, as donors of consumer goods. A series of “Clean out your closet” ads featured women in the style of the day dusting off clothes from their closets. The *New Orleans Item* featured a cartoon woman standing in an open closet door on April 2, 1945; on April 11, the *Times Picayune* printed a photograph of Mrs. Dudley G. Courillon and her daughter holding pieces of clothing as “thousands of housewives in New Orleans” would be doing; and three days later the paper ran a full length article titled, “New Orleans housewives are urged to spend weekend searching attics.”⁵⁰ During the same “Clean Our Your Closet” week, the *Chicago Times* printed a series of three photographs of a woman in front of an open closet dusting off items and noted that her efforts not only served the problems of “war-stricken families overseas” but also “makes us weed out the items we’ve been hoarding...for too long a period.”⁵¹ This kind of advertisement illustrates

⁴⁸ References to Esther were common in philanthropic efforts organized and conducted by women. As Melissa Klapper writes, “The reference to the biblical book of Esther, one of the few named for a woman, was not lost on an audience of Jewish women who believed that striving for peace was their heritage of old.” Melissa R. Klapper, *Ballots, Babies, and Banners of Peace: American Jewish Women's Activism, 1890-1940* (New York: New York University Press, 2012).

⁴⁹ Letter from Ruth Litin, February 10, 1948, Box F-5, Folder: 1948, Circular File 1, Women of Reform Judaism Records (WRJ), AJA.

⁵⁰ News article clippings, vol 2, part 5, UNCC/LOC.

⁵¹ *Chicago Times*, April 8, 1945, clipping in vol 2, part 3, UNCC/LOC.

how the ostensibly humanitarian project of donating old clothes could also call for consumerism that shook women out of their wartime “hoarding.” Women were called on to finally clean out their closets so they could return to the stores and once again become consumers. In these appeals, the needs of victims around the world were blended into the benefits for Americans, inspiring people to give not only for the “war-stricken families,” but for their own benefit and that of the American economy.

Lisabeth Cohen has argued that, in the postwar period, consumerism was promoted as a way to “prolong and enhance the economic recovery brought on by the war” and that the pursuit of prosperity was an American value.⁵² Cohen suggests that American consumerism in the postwar period took on both economic and political meaning as Americans believed mass consumption promised a more equitable political system. She writes, “As Americans lived better and on a more equal footing with their neighbors, it was expected, the dream of a more egalitarian America would finally be achieved.” So that across postwar America, “citizens had a patriotic responsibility to consume.”⁵³ Brett Harvey, in *The Fifties: A Woman’s Oral History*, reiterates this idea by quoting a *Bride Magazine’s* handbook for newlyweds that instructed young married couples to buy American brands because “what you buy and how you buy it is very vital in your new life – and to our whole American way of living.”⁵⁴ These values were reflected in the campaign materials of SOS and UNCC that urged American women to donate old items to make room for new goods and styles. An emergence from the frugal war years was also evident in UNCC calls for fruit and vegetables, which had supplemented food stores during the war, to

⁵² Lisabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Knopf, 2003).

⁵³ Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 108.

⁵⁴ Brett Harvey, *The Fifties: A Women's Oral History* (New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1993), 110.

be canned and sent abroad.⁵⁵ The push for American families to donate these items instead of saving them signified a turn away from the wartime economy. As Shandler articulated, the integration of American Jewish philanthropy and consumerism had already started earlier in the twentieth century and SOS continued this trend while also adopting the larger American motif of shopping as a patriotic act.

Unity as the “American Way”

At the same time that these collection projects turned consumerism into patriotism, they also enabled American Jews to be part of a public campaign for consensus that celebrated American diversity. Wendy Wall and Stephen Porter have both argued that postwar publicity campaigns strategically asserted diversity as an American ideal. Just as the collection of material goods allowed Americans to benefit war victims abroad and their community at home, such volunteer work could also help define the “American Way” through the promotion of doing good at home and promoting American power abroad. Wall makes clear that programs like UNCC could help “find common ground capable of uniting increasingly estranged groups of Americans” and thus benefit American society, communities, and individual homes.⁵⁶ These collection efforts also asserted American interests around the new postwar world. As Stephen Ross Porter has argued, humanitarian projects, particularly those related to refugees and relief,

⁵⁵ A series of Press Releases for the Community Canning Program for War Relief, dated August and September 1945, raise awareness of the need for canned goods. Additionally, a “Supplementary Information” booklet for the Canning Program detailed the amount of sugar to use, shipping, marking, and labeling information. “Supplementary Information,” Reel PI, Side 1a, Folder: Press Releases – Community Canning Program for War Relief, UNRRA/Columbia.

⁵⁶ Wall, *Inventing the “American Way”*, 12.

served as “outward projection[s] of American authority onto a global arena.”⁵⁷ Porter emphasizes that these efforts affirmed American power around the world while also reinforcing domestic agendas like civil rights and identity politics. In this way, the publicity efforts of both UNCC and SOS reflected larger societal concerns about “consensus” in the postwar period and became sites for expressing American values. Exploring SOS publicity in this context further reveals how the collection of material goods refracted stories about the Holocaust through the American trope of unity.

SOS publicity instructions, distributed to local chapters through the national office, were intended to standardize SOS messaging around the country and provide local leaders with ready-to-use material for print, radio, and personal appeals. The instructions specifically encouraged the use of all possible media to “reach the people you want to contribute to SOS. This means using Anglo-Jewish, Yiddish Press, and organizational bulletins, just as much as the general press, posters and exhibits at Jewish organizations in Temples, synagogues and community centers, as well as outdoor auto, truck, window signs.”⁵⁸ The publicity directive revealed a broad appeal model that targeted both Jews and non-Jews as SOS donors. According to the national office, all Jews were to be targeted as SOS donors: English and Yiddish speaking, religious and secular, engaged and unengaged. Non-Jews were also important donors and could be reached through the general press, car windows, and through other forms of mass media.

⁵⁷ Stephen Ross Porter, *Defining Public Responsibility in a Global Age: Refugees, NGOs, and the American State* (PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2009), 5.

⁵⁸ “SOS goes to the people: a campaign manual for leaders,” September 1948, AR 45/54, File 1344, JDC-NY. The campaign manual included press releases, suggested feature articles, radio show scripts, a poster drafts, and other publicity materials like images, buttons, stickers, and cards. Memo from Robert Dolins to SOS Committee Chairmen and Contributing Communities, September 10, 1948, 45/54, #1331, JDC-NY.

UNCC similarly sought as wide an audience as possible and directed local publicity efforts through national directives. UNCC media guidelines dictated the public messaging for the massive network of religious, political, and communal organizations by outlining day-by-day objectives for the month of the drive and daily promotional items to be placed in local newspapers. The publicity packets sent to local publicity chairs included feature length articles, shorts, and fillers, as well as appeal language to be distributed to local clergy and detailed daily and weekly agendas.⁵⁹ This top-down organizational scheme succeeded in presenting a consistent public voice in all corners of the country so that it is impossible to overstate how vast their publicity seems to have been. The publicity office assembled scrapbooks with newspaper clippings and other materials sent in from local committees that confirm the success of national efforts to standardize publicity images and language across the country.⁶⁰

The local articles and newspapers collated in these scrapbooks support Wall's notion that unity in the postwar period was asserted through public programming and rhetoric by featuring stories about groups that were not natural partners in the mid-1940s. In Louisiana, an article titled "Negros Pledge Help in Clothing Collection" remarked that the black leaders of Jefferson Parish committed to collecting 444,000 pounds of clothing; in Jacksonville Florida, "Jewish Women to Aid in War Clothing Drive" applauded 22 women from the National Council of Jewish Women that gave their time to take over command at the central receiving and shipping depot in the Duval County Armory.⁶¹ Considered alongside articles like "Society Women Busy

⁵⁹ Publicity Mailing No. 1, Box 1, Folder: Publicity Mailing, CC-UNCC/AJHS.

⁶⁰ 5 oversized scrapbooks, UNCC/LOC.

⁶¹ "Negros Pledge Help in Clothing Collection," *States*, March 28, 1945, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC and "Jewish Women to Aid in War Clothing Drive," *Jacksonville Times-Union*, April 24, 1945, vol 2, part 3, UNCC/LOC.

Working in Red Cross and Clothes Drives,” these stories celebrated diverse groups working alongside one another and displayed ethnic, racial, and social diversity as an American ideal.⁶²

In this way, UNCC posed philanthropy — both the donation of goods and the volunteer efforts in manning collection locations and organizing materials — as a patriotic activity and celebrated individual actions. Victory Clothing Collection Commendation Certificates were issued for communities who collected beyond their quota level, while printed cartoons, ads, and feature articles, like the ones cited above, celebrated individuals who acted heroically to benefit both their community and those in need around the world.⁶³ That philanthropy and the act of giving used clothes could be framed as an American value was best expressed by Arthur Schlesinger, who said in 1953, "This philanthropic streak in the national character, an index of the pervasive spirit of neighborliness, appeared early and has in our own day reached fabulous dimensions. It is another of the distinguishing marks of the American way."⁶⁴ Schlesinger's recognition that philanthropy in America marked a particular American way was illustrated by UNCC human interest stories published around the country. Mack Meiner of Orlando, FL was celebrated as a "13 year old hero who brought in 1,478 garments" while the town of Atlantic City, Nebraska with a population of only 15 was recognized for having "gathered seventy two garments and t[aking] them to a collection depot by sleigh."⁶⁵

⁶² "Society Women Busy Working in Red Cross and Clothes Drives," *Times Picayune*, April 15, 1945, vol 3, part 5, UNCC/LOC.

⁶³ Clothing Collection Commendation Certificates, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC.

⁶⁴ Arthur Schlesinger, "The True American Way of Life," *St. Louis post-Dispatch*, part two, December 13, 1953, 3.

⁶⁵ "Big Relief Agency is Being Dissolved," *New York Times*, October 19, 1946. Both of these stories were packaged for the press in a February 8, 1946 press release from the Victory Clothing Collection. Press Release #40, sent February 6, 1946, Reel PI, Side 1b, UNRRA/Columbia.

A UNCC-produced radio drama, “Inside Myself” further exemplifies how participation in UNCC benefited America and promoted an ideal American life. Actor Walter Huston was featured as a U.S. soldier’s father who developed an “intense ‘guilt complex’ because he is powerless to aid the family who helped his son escape after he bailed out in enemy territory.”⁶⁶ Huston’s character “regains peace of mind when his psychologist” recommends that he honor the dead by aiding the living through a donation to UNCC.⁶⁷ This kind of story connected UNCC to the war effort and promoted the spirit of philanthropy as one that could bring psychological benefit to individual Americans traumatized by war. According to this story, UNCC also served as an avenue for honoring the dead, an important commemorative act that defined much of postwar American Jewish philanthropy as well.

While UNCC advertisements associated the value of consensus with the participation in mass philanthropy, JDC interpreted this American value for American Jews, both through participation in UNCC and through SOS, which celebrated the diversity of Jews who participated in the collection effort. Just as the leaders of the Boston campaign announced that every Jewish family in the area participated in their 1948 campaign, national leaders of SOS also brought public attention to the consensus of Jews who became SOS donors and volunteers. At the completion of the three-year campaign, Dolins declared that “every section of the American Jewish community” was engaged in SOS work and that the project allowed Jewish volunteers “to express their faith and hope in their fellow Jews.”⁶⁸ In this way, SOS presented two kinds of

⁶⁶ Houston was a prolific actor on Broadway and in Hollywood in the 1930s and 40s who narrated a series of World War II documentaries produced by the Department of Defense. The series, *Why we fight*, was directed by Frank Capra and sought to change public opinion about engagement in the war. Houston most likely came to voice “Inside Myself” through his previous participation in the U.S. war effort.

⁶⁷ Radio Kit, page 2, December 1945, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC.

⁶⁸ “Three Years of Achievement,” 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

Jewish unity: one that connected the disparate elements of American Jewry and the other that connected American Jews with Jewish survivors. Yehuda Bauer argues that SOS was designed for just this purpose, “to recruit new forces in the community”; an idea which Hasia Diner confirms by writing that SOS “bound American Jews together as they engaged in a massive rescue effort.”⁶⁹ As a result, SOS allowed large numbers of American Jews, both those who had previously been affiliated with congregations, organizations, and institutions, and those who hadn’t, to participate in aiding Jews abroad.

This public presentation of unity represented efforts by the national and local organizers to integrate SOS giving into all aspects of American Jewish life. Local organizers solicited families at their homes in door-to-door canvases, in Jewish schools, and in public spaces through city-wide SOS days as documented in the SOS instruction film shot in Rochester.⁷⁰ For example, the town of Long Beach, NY organized four days of SOS events and solicited participation from civic organizations, churches, schools, and local merchants.⁷¹ Summer camps and vacation resorts similarly asked for donations and over 400 summer and day camps participated in the SOS Camp Program, which urged campers to make toys and layettes that could be sent to DPs in Europe and resulted in 100,000 pounds of food and clothes donations.⁷² SOS committees also organized collection events as theater parties, dances, and layette showers where guests were encouraged to bring clothes and canned foods as entry fees. SOS drop off boxes with life size

⁶⁹ Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xxi. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love* 160.

⁷⁰ Untitled Rochester SOS Film, YIVO Film Archive

⁷¹ “Three Years of Achievement,” 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

⁷² “Summer Resort residents mobilize city to aid JDC’s SOS collection,” Press Release, June 21, 1946, Reel 110, IS 4/2, JDC-J/USHMM.

cutout advertisements were placed at grocery stores so that non-Jews could also participate.⁷³

Through each of these coordinated programs, SOS inserted awareness of survivors and their postwar needs into the everyday lives of American Jews.

The use of SOS in camp and Jewish school programming suggests that SOS also became an avenue for teaching about the Holocaust. Raphael Levy, JDC Publicity Director, articulated the possibility for SOS to serve this kind of informative role, writing “I think it would be a terrible shame if the JDC did not use this magnificent opportunity to create a little bit of understanding of its problem and propaganda in its own behalf.”⁷⁴ As such, Levy recognized the potential of a program like SOS to communicate the work of JDC and promote financial support for the organization, but he also noted that SOS could transmit knowledge about the survivors and their experiences to American Jews. In reference to the launch letter for SOS, he emphasized, “It is amazing how little most of the people who are going to receive this letter know about the need overseas.”⁷⁵ As such, SOS was not only a way to collect needed clothing and canned goods, but a program through which the work of JDC could be advertised and the scale of the suffering in Europe could be publicized. Although the collection of high heels, fur coats, and evening gowns suggests otherwise, SOS publicity informed American Jews about the

⁷³ “Three Years of Achievement.” These events are also detailed in numerous press releases and publicity memos. One of Eddie Cantor’s recorded announcements publicized marked grocery bags that people were asked to fill with canned foods and give to SOS volunteers on their city-wide SOS Collection day. “Eddie Cantor #1” Radio Spot, with memo from Robert Dolins to SOS Chairmen and contributing communities conducting Fall Drives, September 8, 1948, 45/54, #1344, JDC-NY.

⁷⁴ Memo from Raphael Levy to Louis Sobel, November 14, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

plight of survivors and, according to Dolins, “SOS became a medium for people in all walks of life to express their kinship with Europe’s Jews.”⁷⁶

UNCC leaders similarly saw the mass participation in these collection efforts as a “magnificent opportunity” for positive publicity about the work of UNRRA. One archivist remembered, “UNRRA had been able to do very little that made copy for the press, and, as a result...most people in the US and in the world had never heard of UNRRA. Many persons within the [UNRRA] Administration believed that there was a golden opportunity to make the general public familiar with UNRRA’s aims and functions.”⁷⁷ In 1945, UNRRA was still a new organization and Americans at large were skeptical about involvement in a binding and permanent international institution like the UN. Popular participation in and approval for UNCC allowed UNRRA to publicize the kind of work they conducted around the world.

The language here is almost identical to that of SOS – the leaders of both groups saw the projects of used clothing collection as valuable PR that defined American ideals at home and abroad. Yet, there is a slight, but important, difference between the values of these two publicity efforts. While Levy sought public attention for JDC in the same way that UNCC leaders wanted PR for the work of UNRRA, he also recognized that SOS could bring public attention to the survivors beyond the humanitarian work of JDC. Dolins similarly asserted that SOS allowed American Jews to express their relationship with the Jews of Europe, so that the public rhetoric of SOS was not only a celebration of American generosity and philanthropic activity, but a way to transmit understanding of who survivors were and why they needed continued aid.

⁷⁶ Robert Dolins, “Everybody’s Campaign,” “Three Years of Achievement,” 7, 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

⁷⁷ “Comments upon the history of clothing drives prepared by Dorothy Clark, of the Office of Chief Historian and Archivist,” Reel H/6, Side 2, Comments on the History of Clothing Drives, UNRRA/Columbia.

While much of the SOS public rhetoric conveyed the same American values as the publicity of UNCC, including a celebration of public consensus, a spirit of philanthropy, and the benefit of American aid abroad, the tone of the appeals was often quite different. Even when each group adopted the same publicity strategy, the result could be markedly different. For example, both SOS and UNCC employed celebrities to promote their collections. SOS tapped Eddie Cantor, Dick Powell, and Henry Fonda to voice radio campaign ads that were recorded and distributed for use by local radio stations.⁷⁸ Eddie Cantor's ads presented his experiences traveling to Europe with JDC in the summer of 1948 and seeing SOS packages being delivered in a particularly somber tone. In one spot, Cantor said:

Ladies and Gentlemen, going to Europe this summer has taught me the true meaning of your help to the surviving Jews of Europe. You have given more by your personal gifts of milk, fruit juices, of canned meats than one can imagine. Through your SOS sacks of canned goods, you've said to these brave people, that you want them to live and be happy. I needn't tell you that there was a time, a long time, of deliberate murder, of mass starvation, of hideous torture. Yes, their troubles are still very real. The Jews of Europe still need your help. Your cans of food, your gifts expressing trust and love. You can help this week by giving to your city SOS drive. SOS stands for Supplies for Overseas Survivors. The food line from your home to those who suffered most.⁷⁹

Cantor's story highlighted the needs of survivors in Europe, specifically calling attention to the Holocaust experience of most European Jews as one of "deliberate murder, of mass starvation" and "of hideous torture." While this story of the Holocaust was told alongside the potential for American aid, the tone was not one of celebration. Cantor did not congratulate the American

⁷⁸ SOS Radio Ads, YIVO Sound Archive. The publicity memo from 1948 also included transcripts of a "radio platter of nine one minute transcribed appeals by Eddie Cantor, Henry Fonda, and Dick Powell, for use in house-to-house canvasses and other concentrated campaign periods." Memo from Robert Dolins to SOS Committee Chairmen and Contributing Communities, September 10, 1948, 45/54, #1331, JDC-NY. Publicity images were also distributed of Cantor, Powell, and Fonda recording the radio spots under the headlines, "Henry Fonda voices appeal to aid SOS fall campaign"; "Eddie Cantor answers SOS"; and "Dick Powell broadcasts to aid local SOS drives," "Campaign Pictures," 45/54, #1345, JDC-NY.

⁷⁹ Three of Cantor's five short ads mention his trip to Europe.

Jews who had given supplies, but rather called on them give again to end the ongoing “troubles.” He personalized the anonymous gifts of canned meats and fruit juices and expressed the potential of these gifts not to bring peace of mind to the donors, but to “those who suffered most.”

Cantor’s call for sustained and meaningful aid stands in stark contrast to the celebrity endorsements promoted by UNCC. Images ran in local newspapers across the country, including photos of Gypsy Rose Lee, Ginger Rogers, and Shirley Temple, who celebrated her 16th birthday by “gathering clothing from her wardrobe, including dresses and costumes she wore in her early movies, for contribution to the United National Clothing Collection.”⁸⁰ Another distributed image of Toni Seven, Ann Miller, Evelyn Ankers, Nina Foch and Renee DeMarco was described as five movie stars who “staged a strip poker session for the United National Clothing Drive last night...The curves they revealed for sweet charity’s sake would never pass a movie censor.”⁸¹ These images played on the idea of taking off your clothes to give to those in need. Another commonly repeated image depicted a beautiful woman under a barrel, suggesting that she had given away all of her clothes. These racy images contrasted with the wholesome portraits of housewives cleaning out closets and collecting baby clothes, sheets, and dresses from the attic. Yet, both of these advertising strategies suggest that UNCC became a popular way to donate old items with no connection at all to the needs of war victims around the world.

Used Clothing as a Weapon of Peace

⁸⁰ The Shirley Temple picture was the most commonly repeated, in newspapers from Louisiana, Florida, Montana, Illinois, and more, including articles from the Lewistown, MT *Fergus County Argus* in vol 2, part 5 and *Chicago Times*, April 18, 1945, vol 2, part 3, UNCC/LOC.

⁸¹ “Curves for Charity,” *Chicago Daily News*, March 29, 1945, vol 2, part 3, UNCC/LOC.

Sending American values abroad in the late 1940s was also part of the emerging battle for influence across Europe. In the early post war, the goods distributed by UNRRA in Europe, particularly in sites of contestation like Greece and Italy, as well as China and the Philippines became politicized and, by January 1946, when the second national clothing drive took place, the used clothes donated by Americans became expressions of American friendship and weapons in the postwar battle for peace. President Truman articulated the relationship between used clothes and peace when he called on Kaiser to lead the Victory Clothing Collection. Truman wrote, "Without adequate clothing and other necessities of life to sustain victims of war on the long road to rehabilitation there can be no peace."⁸² In this way, used clothing took on new value in the postwar world and philanthropy became part of the fight for peace. The president's call for clothing to sustain war victims and propel them towards peace was translated to the American public through Kaiser's announcement of the second clothing drive. He asked donors to include short notes of friendship in the pockets of their donations, explaining that such notes could help bring peace to a world destroyed by war:

“During our collection last spring, it was discovered that many Americans enclosed letters with their contributions. These letters were warmly received and inspired many friendly replies. In the Victory Clothing Collection, the American people will have an opportunity to write 100,000,000 letters to their allies. I am tremendously interested, as I think you will be, in the contribution which this expression of international friendship can bring to the peace of the world.”⁸³

⁸² Letter from President Harry Truman to Henry Kaiser, August 21, 1945, released September 23, 1945., printed in the *New York Times*, September 24, 1945, available at: <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=12340>.

⁸³ Letter from Henry Kaiser in Victory Clothing Collection Information Bulletin 4: Educational Program and good-will letters, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC.

The letter writing campaign thus signaled an attempt to make clothing collection an “adventure in friendship,” that extended the allegiances of war into the postwar period.⁸⁴

The idea that donating old clothing could be part of an extended war effort was formalized in UNCC publicity. For example, an August 1945 press release stated, “Now that Europe’s guns have cooled, food must continue the fight for freedom if starving millions are to survive and justify the price paid in freedom’s name.”⁸⁵ The association between food and freedom directly echoed President Truman’s radio remarks made only four days earlier, when he warned that wars are not won “once and for all.” Rather, he said, “Victory in a great war is something that must be won and kept won. It can be lost after you have won it – if you are careless or negligent or indifferent...If we let Europe go cold and hungry, we may lose some of the foundation of order on which the hope for world peace must rest.”⁸⁶ Much as the Marshall Plan sought to secure peace and order through economic aid, UNRRA intended to send good will and fight for peace through used clothing and canned food.⁸⁷

The letters collected through the Victory campaign reflected the idea that such displays of friendship could defend the Allied victory. Even children hoped to join the war effort in this way,

⁸⁴ Victory Clothing Collection Information Bulletin 4: Educational Program and good-will letters, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC.

⁸⁵ Press Release, August 13, 1945, Reel PI/1, Side 1, Folder: United National Clothing Collection Press Releases, UNRRA/Columbia.

⁸⁶ Radio Report on the Potsdam Conference, President Truman, August 9, 1945, accessed at Truman Library Public Papers, www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=104&st=&st1. This quote was used by the UNCC in a press release on August 14, 1945 about a canning drive run through the UNCC administration. Americans were urged to can food they had grown in their victory gardens that they could not eat and donate it at their local canning center to be sent to Europe.

⁸⁷ Bauer explained, “America, and not only American Jewry, was extending a helping hand to devastated societies and peoples. The Marshall Plan, an example of enlightened self-interest of the American way of life, resuscitated a prostrate Western European economy and enabled the countries which received aid from it from 1947 on, to rebuild their democratic systems of government, as well as their economies.” Bauer, *Out of Ashes*, xxii.

as this letter, placed in the pocket of a donation and copied in UNCC publicity materials, made clear:

Dear Friends: Though you don't know our names, we are your Ally and Americans. We are doing our best to help get clothes and other vital materials for your war-torn countries so that we may help you in this dreadful war. / We hope these clothes reach you very soon and make you as happy to wear them as we in America are to send them. In this small way we feel that we are helping to bring this war closer, although we are too young to fight with guns.⁸⁸

For these young writers, sending clothes and writing short notes was their contribution to the war. While they were too young to “fight with guns,” they could support American allies through philanthropy. The Victory Clothing Collection thus transformed used clothes into surrogates for guns as the battles of war became the postwar fight for peace.

That used clothes could be a weapon in the ongoing fight for peace also found traction in political spheres in relation to the fears of atomic war. Hugh DeLacy, a Democratic Representative from Washington State, addressed the House of Representatives about the humanitarian work of UNRRA, saying, “Scientists say there is no defense against the awful destructiveness of the atomic bomb. No material defense. It behooves man to strengthen his spiritual defense. Surely the steadfast helpfulness and kindness and humanity of the American spirit will generate its own energy of constructiveness.”⁸⁹ Here, DeLacy claimed that the UNCC, through the collection of household goods (an example of “kindliness” and “the American spirit”), could generate “spiritual defense” against the threat of atomic war. UNCC picked up this language, telling Americans, “In this atomic age, we all live on the same street” and insisting

⁸⁸ “Youngsters send messages to allies with old clothes,” *Times Picayune*, May 13, 1945, vol 2, part 5, UNCC/LOC.

⁸⁹ Transcript of remarks by Hon. Hugh DeLacy in the House of Representatives, October 18, 1945, vol 1, part 1, UNCC/LOC

that we can “all do our part” by donating clothes, food, or other materials.⁹⁰ Asserting that the donation of material goods could fend off atomic war further cemented the association of used clothes as weapons for peace and suggested that used clothes could save the world.

The language of friendship and the belief that peace could be achieved through humanitarian aid also informed SOS and Jewish aid in the postwar period. The 1946 JDC fundraising film, *Battle for Survival* (described in chapter two), depicted the postwar struggles of Jewish survivors as a continuation of the war.⁹¹ Additionally, SOS employed language that related used clothes and material goods to peace in their publicity materials, combining the pursuit of Jewish survival with that of sustained peace. In a short radio advertisement for SOS, Dick Powell told the story of “David,” a generic Jewish name used to represent 30,000 Jewish orphans still in Europe under JDC support in 1948. Powell asked his audience, “Would you like to know what happened to David?” and then explained that after years of fear and loneliness, SOS helped David return to life, saying “Good nourishing food that you gave your local SOS collection is beginning to put flesh and muscle on David’s skinny frame. Little by little, David is learning to put his fears away, to play, to dream, and to hope. Think of David when you fill your SOS food sack this week. With every can of good nourishing food that you put in, you will be telling David that you have faith in him...and, in peace.”⁹² Powell’s appeal thus aligned survivor rehabilitation in the postwar period with the emergence of peace and hope – each of which needed American aid to be achieved.

⁹⁰ Special release #117, suggested editorial for the Victory Drive, January 1946, Reel PI/1, Side 1, Folder: Victory Clothing Collection, Press Releases, UNRRA/Columbia.

⁹¹ *Battle for Survival* (RKO), 1946, narrated by Orson Welles, USHMM Steven Spielberg Film and Video Archive. The entire 1946 JDC fundraising campaign was designed around this theme.

⁹² Dick Powell Radio announcement script, Memo from Robert Dolins to SOS Chairmen and contributing communities conducting Fall campaigns, September 8, 1948, 45/54, #1344, JDC-NY.

That the Jews of America were particularly responsible for this work was, perhaps, best articulated by Frieda Schiff Warburg, who said of the Jewish survivors, "Their lives depend upon the help that can come only from America. Our contributions of food, warm clothing, and other relief items will help them not only physically to withstand the rigors of the coming winter, which already has set in over Central Europe, but also will serve to restore their dignity and self-respect."⁹³ For American Jews, then, the Cold War context was not the only reason to send friendship abroad. In fact, the need for rehabilitation, which required not only the material goods of SOS, but the friendship and hope of American Jews, was a direct response to the loss of the Holocaust. In a 1949 speech to SOS volunteers, Gilman explicitly associated Jewish persecution under Nazism with the need for American Jewish friendship, stating, "We could not restore to Europe's Jews the six million fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters slain by the Nazis. But we can be thankful that we could and did help them with the supplies they needed to begin life again."⁹⁴ More than supplies, then, the real gift of SOS was the friendship sent by American Jews, as Gilman declared, these supplies "provide food for only a week" but restore hope and faith "for a much longer time."

The idea articulated by Warburg and Gilman – that Americans provided the only hope for Europe's Jews echoed postwar American sentiments more broadly. As early as December 1945 this idea found popular expression in a *Saturday Evening Post* article, titled "World Relief is America's Job," that presented America as "the only country still capable of producing in quantity what the world needs" and, therefore, must support the "National Clothing Drive."⁹⁵

⁹³ "More than 3,500,000 pounds of contributed relief supplies shipped overseas by JDC's SOS Collection," press release, November 8, 1946, Reel 110, IS 4/2, JDC-J/USHMM.

⁹⁴ Speech by Mrs. Isaac Gilman given at April 1949 luncheon in honor of SOS, 45/54, #1330, JDC-NY.

⁹⁵ "World Relief is America's Job," *Saturday Evening Post*, December 22, 1945, vol 2, part 4, UNCC/LOC.

The author noted that Americans, still living in their homes, had not suffered “Nazi torture and slavery” and as such, “must be a Santa Claus” and “Clara Barton” at once – sending material goods, medicine, and good cheer. Not only was generous philanthropy the right thing to do, but donations to the UNCC would help preserve what had been fought for in the war. As the article continued, “The reward, [for giving] aside from the satisfaction of having sacrificed a little to give the world a leg up from the abyss, may well be the salvation of Europe.”⁹⁶ This article thus expressed the dual intentions of UNCC: to collect clothes and food as a way of performing patriotism at home and sending peace abroad. In this way, the rhetoric of the early cold war transformed the anonymous donations of clothes and good into weapons for peace. SOS constructed publicity in the same context and adapted the idea of peace and hope for Jewish concerns. Through this lens, American Jews became the “lifeline” to Europe’s Jews through both material and spiritual support.

Disembodied Objects as Holocaust symbols

Let me now return to the objects themselves. Thus far, the clothes and food collected by both UNCC and SOS have played many roles. They have provided publicity for UNRRA and JDC, encouraged Americans and American Jews to act as heroes, been cleaned out of closets to make room for new purchases, and been transformed into weapons for peace. In each case, these objects became expressions of American values that elevated the donation of used (including damaged or unwanted) material goods into generous acts of patriotism. At the same time, in concentration camps across the defeated Nazi landscape, these same objects had starkly different

⁹⁶ Ibid.

meanings. The shoes and clothes piled up in warehouses in Poland or Germany were not objects of hope and friendship that could support rehabilitation. Rather, they were objects without bodies that became evidence of the Final Solution and traces of the people that once wore them.

In this context, shoes were seen as particularly poignant symbols of lives lost. The 1943 poem by Avrom Sutzkever, written in the Vilna ghetto, “A Load of Shoes” best expresses the way shoes became disembodied tokens of lost Jewish lives. Sutzkever’s poem described a cartload of shoes and meditated on their owners:

The cartwheels rush,
quivering.
What is their burden?
Shoes, shivering.

The cart is like
a great hall:
the shoes crushed together
as though at a ball.

A wedding? A party?
Have I gone blind?
Who have these shoes
left behind?

The heels clatter
with a fearsome din,
transported from Vilna
to Berlin.

I should be still,
my tongue is like meat,
but the truth, shoes,
where are your feet? ...⁹⁷

⁹⁷ Avrom Sutzkever, “A Load of Shoes,” in David G. Roskies, *The Literature of Destruction: Jewish Responses to Catastrophe*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 493.

It is not just the individual shoes that tell the tale of loss. Sutzkever references the heap of shoes piled high on the cart, an image that evoked the scale of death. Piles of shoes, even during the war, thus became powerful symbols of the magnitude of the Holocaust. In the aftermath of the war, these piles continued to represent both individual lives lost and the scale of destruction. A report published in *Hadassah Headlines* documented the “820,000 pairs of shoes, shoes belonging to the victims of murder, inc. found in a warehouse in Poland.”⁹⁸ Although less literary, this report similarly depicted piles of shoes as a representation of the scale of death wrought by the Holocaust and its industrialization of murder.

Piles of shoes and piles of other home goods – including clothes, glasses, suitcases – have maintained this symbolic meaning. So much so that in her work, *Jews and Shoes*, Edna Nashon writes, “It is impossible to conclude an essay on Jews and shoes without referring to the Holocaust. Heaps of empty shoes have become its visual icon, an assemblage of death that represents lives barbarously brought to their final destination, each shoe a story into itself.”⁹⁹ While shoes might be the most iconic of these objects, the piling of objects in a way that communicates their unfulfilled use has become a powerful exhibition strategy that conveys not just the loss of life in the Holocaust, but also the process of the Final Solution. So that the heaped eye glasses, suitcases, and baby clothes displayed behind glass at the Auschwitz Museum aren’t only evoking the individual stories of the object’s owners or the scale of destruction, but also memorializing the process in which Jews brought those items with them to the concentration

⁹⁸ *Hadassah Headlines*, October 1944, HN/Hadassah.

⁹⁹ Edna Nashon, “Jews and Shoes,” Edna Nashon, ed., *Jews and Shoes, The Berg Fashion Library*. The Berg Fashion Library, 2008. Web. March 12, 2014. <http://www.bergfashionlibrary.com/view/JEWSSHOES/chapter-JEWSSHOES0004.xml>

camp, where they were then confiscated, sorted, and stored for later use while their owners were also sorted and killed.

These items have thus become powerful symbols both as individual objects and as collective piles. As Jeffrey Feldman has argued, these piles resonate with us “because they are familiar, but assembled in ways that lead to painful and embodied impressions of the past.”¹⁰⁰ Feldman calls particular attention to the shoes — “Half-rotten, half-preserved, leather shoes are almost always found in these Holocaust museum displays of relics. Of all the actual piles in museums and memorials of Holocaust objects, as well as the films of piles and still photographs of piles, shoes are the original sin of the species” — which he traces back to the use of a child’s shoe as evidence at the 1961 trial of Adolph Eichmann. Even in the decades before the Eichmann trial, shoes had already found a place in the American imagination of the Holocaust, as the Hadassah report suggests.

SOS further defined these objects in relation to the Holocaust, collecting all of the objects that later became museum exhibits – clothes, shoes, suitcases, medical objects, and religious materials – but they did not represent the loss and destruction of the Holocaust. On the contrary, they represented hope and friendship as a balm to the Holocaust. These items, intended as supplies rather than remnants, were proudly portrayed in piles to be sent to Europe for the surviving Jews and quantified in celebration of American generosity. More pointedly, these piles were bundled up, packed on to train cars, and shipped to the DP camps of Europe, many of

¹⁰⁰ Jeffrey Feldman, “The Holocaust Shoe: Untying Memory—Shoes as Holocaust Memorial Experience.” Edna Nashon, ed., *Jews and Shoes, The Berg Fashion Library*. The Berg Fashion Library, 2008. Web. 12 Mar. 2014. <http://www.bergfashionlibrary.com/view/JEWSSHOES/chapter-JEWSSHOES0013.xml>. Nashon also suggests that shoes became important objects of commemoration because they were tied to longer traditions of Jewish mourning. Nashon, “Jews and Shoes.” See also, Jeffrey Feldman, “Contact Points: Museums and the Lost Body Problem,” in *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums and Material Culture*, ed. Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2006) 245-267.

which were housed at former concentration camps. So that the material goods which outlived their owners remained stored in warehouses while donated goods were sent from America in much the same fashion as Jews were sent to their death: by train. How did American Jews understand the images of trains in SOS publicity and how did the association of trains with hope and friendship reconcile with images of trains coming from Europe? American Jews in the postwar period did not reject one or the other, but allowed a multiplicity of meanings to define these symbols in a way that Holocaust iconography no longer accommodates.

Cultural representations in film and literature have concretized the relationship between trains and the Holocaust and museums around the world have sanctified train cars as spaces for experiential learning and commemoration.¹⁰¹ In particular, *Shoah* and *Schindler's List* defined the symbolic meaning of trains as elements of the Nazi Final Solution for popular audiences around the world. In *Shoah*, director Claude Lanzmann employs trains as a central motif to traverse the landscapes of Holocaust memory, but his interview with a train conductor who brought Jews to Treblinka is the most provocative assertion that trains were a means of death during the Holocaust. Lanzmann films the conductor in action and as the train pulls into the Treblinka station, he thoughtlessly drags his finger across his throat, making a signal of death.¹⁰² This slight action brings to life the association of trains and death in the Holocaust.

¹⁰¹ In terms of trains and experiential Holocaust lessons, I'm thinking particularly of the school children documented in the film *Paperclips*. Daniel Magilow explores the film in depth in his study of how collecting has since become a form of Holocaust memorialization. Daniel H. Magilow, "Counting to Six Million: Collecting Projects and Holocaust Memorialization," *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Fall, 2007), 23-39.

¹⁰² Claude Lanzmann, *Shoah* 1985. For more about the images of trains see the essays in Stuart Liebman, *Claude Lanzmann's Shoah: Key Essays*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), particularly Marcel Ophüls' "Closely watched trains."

Steven Spielberg referenced this scene in *Schindler's List* when a bystander similarly drew a finger across her throat while watching a train car full of women arrive at Auschwitz.¹⁰³ *Schindler's List* additionally associated trains with the process of the Final Solution by placing the camera inside the train, bringing audiences closer to the thirst, hunger, and fear of being stuffed in a rail car.¹⁰⁴ Later in the film, Spielberg depended upon the audience's association of trains with death to build suspense before Schindler managed to remove his trusted accountant, Itzhak Shtern, from the train in the nick of time.¹⁰⁵

The association of trains and the Holocaust as one of dehumanization, torture, and death has been reinforced in Holocaust museums around the country (and around the world) that place German rail cars in their permanent exhibits to represent the process of deportation.¹⁰⁶ The largest Holocaust museum in the country, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, invites its million and a half annual visitors to enter a German rail car and experience what it might have felt like to be transported to a concentration camp on a cattle car. As Edward Linenthal writes, the museum encourages visitors to follow the movement of Jews "from their normal lives into ghettos, out of ghettos into trains, from trains to camps..." so that

¹⁰³ See Sara R. Horowitz, "But is it good for the Jews? Spielberg's *Schindler's List* and the Aesthetics of Atrocity," in Yosefa Loshitzky, ed, *Spielberg's Holocaust: Critical Perspectives on Schindler's List*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997) 119 – 139, 123.

¹⁰⁴ Steven Spielberg, *Schindler's List*, 1993.

¹⁰⁵ Horowitz claims that this scene is meant to evoke relief from the audience, writing, "the audience is directed to forget the death-bound human cargo on that train." But, of course, the idea that the train itself is the symbol of death makes the idea of relief possible. Horowitz, "But is it good for the Jews?" 136.

¹⁰⁶ The Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center celebrated the arrival of their rail car "of the kind used in Nazi deportation programs" in a memorial ceremony on November 24, 2005. At the ceremony, Museum Director, Richard S. Hirschhaut said, "We believe this car will provide a platform for telling the story of the Holocaust in a way that goes beyond just words and pictures, making visitors understand on a deeper level the horror of the Holocaust, the essence of which is that people were completely stripped of their humanity, and eventually often lost their lives, once they entered these cars." IHMEC Newsletter, *Centered*, Vol 2 (Winter 2006), 4, accessed on May 5, 2014, <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/filebin/PDF/NEWSWinter06.pdf>.

“if visitors could take that same journey, they would understand the story because they will have experienced the story.”¹⁰⁷ In this way, the actual rail car inspires the idea of a train moving to the camps and allows museum visitors to experience one essential element of the Holocaust story.¹⁰⁸

In the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, images of trains conveyed a sense of death and horror to American audiences, while also representing progress, hope, and friendship. The 1948 short film, *Placing the Displaced*, serves as one example of how these multiple meanings could co-exist. The film, produced by HIAS, aired on CBS in 1948 and told the story of Sam Miller, a Jewish man from Warsaw who survived Auschwitz and was reunited with his family after the war. After narrating the bombing of Warsaw in 1939, the film details the dispersion of Sam’s family: “Sam Miller was sent to Auschwitz, his wife to Dachau, their oldest son was killed resisting arrest, their babies were taken by a friendly gentile family.”¹⁰⁹ To depict this journey, the film projects a series of images: first, a group of people marching down the middle of a road with suitcases, followed by a rail car riding down the train tracks, and finally men standing behind barbed wire. Each of the objects depicted in this sequence became symbols of the concentration camp: suitcases, trains, and barbed wire. In postwar America, they similarly expressed a Holocaust experience and a train moving along its track was primary among them. Eventually, the film offers a happy ending for Sam, who finds his wife, and two children after the war and they all find a home in America. As Sam’s family is leaving the DP camp, the film

¹⁰⁷ Edward T. Linenthal, *Preserving Memory: The Struggle to Create American’s Holocaust Museum*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 170.

¹⁰⁸ For a discussion on the value of such “experiential” approaches to representing the Holocaust, see Gary Weissman, *Fantasies of Witnessing: Postwar Efforts to Experience the Holocaust*, (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2004), 95-96.

¹⁰⁹ HIAS, *Placing the Displaced*, 1948, YIVO Film Archive.

dwells on another shot of a moving train; this time, people are leaning out of the windows, waving and the narrator reveals that the train (and Sam) are “going to freedom, to live, to hope.” These two competing notions of train transportation — as a symbol of death and of freedom — existed simultaneously for the surviving Jews of Europe and for American donors.

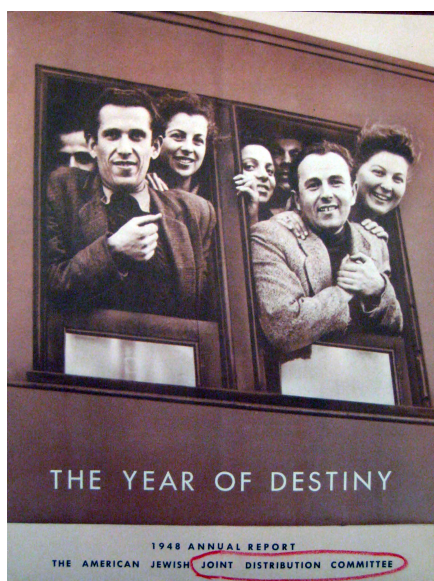


Figure 5: A trainload of survivors cheer their departure from Germany enroute to Israel.

1948 JDC Annual Report, Box 3, Folder 2, HAFP/AJA. Courtesy of the American Jewish Archive.

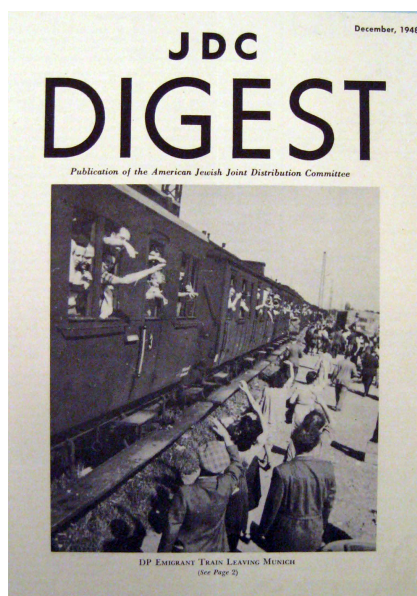


Figure 6: A trainload of survivors joyfully wave goodbye to Germany.

JDC Digest, December 1948, Box 3, Folder 2, HAFP/AJA. Courtesy of the American Jewish Archive.

The front cover of the 1948 UJA “Year of Destiny” Yearbook (Figure 5) reinforces the visual relationship between trains and a Jewish future by featuring a gang of young people leaning out of a window of a train car. They are smiling widely and joyfully, on their way to Palestine. In December 1948, the *JDC Digest* also featured a train on its cover (Figure 6); again, people lean out the window and wave while others standing outside the train wave back. The caption reads, “DP emigrant train leaving Munich” and the accompanying article, written by Raphael Levy, reported that “each month some 4,000 Jewish DPs leave Germany by train for

France, where they board the ships that take them to Israel.”¹¹⁰ In describing the departure of one of these trains, Levy exclaims, “Over the entire scene hung an air of triumph.” Thus, even for the same Jews who had been subject to Hitler’s deportations and who understood the relationship between trains and the Final Solution, trains became symbols of hope as they enabled immigration out of Germany.

In postwar America, trains took on yet another meaning, becoming ubiquitous symbols of movement and progress. In this light, trains were employed as sites of patriotism. The Freedom Train, a travelling exhibit of items from the National Archives, brought defining American documents, including a rough draft of the Declaration of Independence, an annotated Constitution, and the flag planted at Iwo Jima, to Americans across the country, allowing people who would never visit Washington, DC to connect with core American ideals.¹¹¹ The train, dubbed the “Spirit of 1776,” toured across America for two years (1947-49), welcoming 50 million Americans on board, to celebrate American values and affirm citizenship as a unifying identity for all Americans.¹¹² Wall contends that the Freedom Train was the most ambitious example of how unity was publicly depicted as an American ideal in the postwar period.¹¹³ Cities hosted celebrations at train stations and held week-long rallies to further promote a sense of civic pride.

¹¹⁰ Raphael Levy, “The Emigrant Train,” *JDC Digest*, December 1948, Box 3, Folder 2, HAFP/AJA.

¹¹¹ Wall, *American Way*, 202.

¹¹² Stuart J. Little, “The Freedom Train: Citizenship and Postwar Political Culture 1946-1949,” *American Studies* (34:1) Spring 1993, 35-67.

¹¹³ Wall, *American Way*, 201, 220.

In choosing to use a train as the vessel for teaching patriotism and civic unity across the country, the Freedom Train celebrated both the American past and also industrial achievements and possibilities for the American future. Other communal projects, such as the Friendship Train, similarly used trains to celebrate American values and send friendship abroad. The Friendship Train, a grassroots effort that collected household goods from across the U.S. and sent them to Western Europe, drew upon this symbolic meaning to inspire American aid for Europe. The project emerged following Drew Pearson's October 11, 1947 "Washington Merry Go-Round column" that raised concerns about a French celebration of Soviet Grain.¹¹⁴ Pearson urged America to launch a more robust publicity campaign, writing, "this time we take steps to see that the people of Europe evaluate this campaign for exactly what it is – a genuine sacrifice from the heart of America."¹¹⁵ Pearson encouraged his readers to donate food from their homes, kitchens, gardens, and fields that would be sent to Europe to "visualize" and "dramatize" the "real story" of Americans "trying to help."

Like the Freedom Train, the Friendship Train inspired celebrations at train stations across the country and ended with a ticker-tape parade in New York City.¹¹⁶ The trains were then sent to Europe and delivered with pomp and circumstance in France, Italy, Greece, Germany, Norway, and Austria. To assure that Europeans knew where the goods had come from, each item was labeled with the following copy: "All races and creeds make up the vast melting pot of America, and in a democratic and Christian spirit of goodwill toward men, we, the American

¹¹⁴ Drew Pearson, "Merry-Go-Round," October 11, 1947, The Bell Syndicate, Inc, available at American University online archive of Drew Pearson's Washington Merry-Go-Round: proxy.aladin0.wrlc.org/gsd/collect/pearson/pearson.shtml.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ "\$10,000 Food Goal for Friendship Train," Ames Daily Tribune, November 4, 1947. Available at: http://www.ameshistoricalsociety.org/exhibits/events/1947.11.04_friendship_train_map_article.jpg.

people, have worked together to bring this food to your doorsteps, hoping that it will tide you over until your own fields are again rich and abundant with crops."¹¹⁷ Through this messaging, the Friendship Train illustrates all of the postwar American values explored in this chapter: the “melting pot” of American unity, a spirit of philanthropy, and the assertion of international friendship. That the “American Way” would be transported and celebrated on a train was both a logistical reality and a symbolic pairing.

Conclusion

The objects of SOS, both the donated items and the trains used to quantify and transport these materials, thus became celebrated symbols of freedom and friendship. For American Jews in the postwar period, the spirit of philanthropy reinforced this message even as they understood the loss of Jewish life in Europe and the affiliation of clothes, shoes, and trains with the Nazi machinery of death. These objects held multiple meanings simultaneously, representing both the industrialized extermination of the Holocaust and a humanitarian response to it.

The tension between these opposing meanings offers an alternative way of understanding Holocaust symbols. In Holocaust museums around the world, these objects have become relics, evoking a deep sense of loss, and displayed behind glass in a sanctified space. Shoes, in particular, evoke lost bodies. As individual shoes, they refer to the feet that once wore them and the individual lives lost. As piles, they represent the scale of the Holocaust and the process of collection that the Nazism conducted. In the postwar period, the collection efforts of American

¹¹⁷ <http://www.thefriendshiptrain1947.org/>. The website notes that each item also included a label with a persons name and address, individualizing the donor.

Jews and piles of shoes and clothes represented the outpouring of American Jewish donations in the name of Jewish survivors. That these two meanings could co-exist does not suggest that American Jews had not yet confronted the Holocaust. Rather, it suggests that the modes of representations that transmitted stories about the Holocaust to American Jews were not yet institutionalized. For American Jews, as for Jewish survivors, trains could be both a means of industrialized murder and a way out of Germany; they could be both a tragedy of the past and a means of reaching the future.

In this way, the context of postwar America and the promotion of American values that defined the collection efforts of SOS shaped these early representations of the Holocaust and the way American Jews understood them. Responding to the tragedy of the Holocaust through philanthropy and through anonymous collection, specifically, allowed American Jews to act as patriotic Americans and Jews at the same time. As both UNCC and SOS transformed the act of collecting into an act of friendship and hope, American Jews understood their own participation to be a meaningful response to the Holocaust and an assertion of Jewish unity.

4.

Dear Friend: Pen pal, “Adoption,” and Correspondence Programs

In a letter dated January 24, 1947, Rose D., a 20-year-old Jewish girl in Budapest wrote to Mrs. Catherine Varchaver, the Director of the Child Care Division of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), seeking support and correspondence. Rose wrote in English, articulating her experiences under Nazism, her memories of family lost, and the psychological effects that had not gone away, saying:

What I lived through under the German occupation and in the concentration camps is to other people an ordinary and perhaps dull story, - for me it is an ineffaceable memory... During one year, '44-'45, I grew old – 10 years. The effect of physical suffering passed quickly – the bald head, the skeleton-thinness are past. But psychological effects have not lost their intensity.

I often remember my relatives who burnt in Auschwitz – the dear old men and women, the children; young men and young mothers with babies. I was in two camps, in Ravensbruck and in Penig... My number was 93,317. It was and still is readable on my left arm. A man was only a number – nothing more...”¹

Rose’s letter, which ends with a request for financial aid to facilitate her continued studies in chemistry and the hope that someone would write back to her, is representative of the kinds of letters inspired by the programs of the WJC Child Care Division.² Her letter exemplifies how the needs of the surviving Jews in postwar Europe and the efforts of American Jewish organizations to respond to those needs were tied to the telling of Holocaust experiences.

¹ “Let us help Jewish boys and girls who want to study!” May 28, 1947, Box D74, File 10, World Jewish Congress Records (WJC), AJA.

² Rose’s letter ended, “If you or your acquaintances can do something for me, I shall be very happy. But I shall be happiest if you will answer me a few words.” Ibid.

By winter 1947, when Rose's letter arrived in New York, the WJC Child Care Division had already paired thousands of young Jewish survivors of Nazi terror with American sponsors and pen-pals through three inter-related programs: The Correspondents' Service for European Jewish Children, The Foster-Parents Plan, and the Adopt-A-Family plan. These initiatives addressed the challenges facing European child survivors by facilitating direct support through correspondence with American Jews. The Foster-Parents Plan asked sponsors to donate \$300 per year to support the maintenance and education of one "foster child" and to correspond with their designated child. The Correspondents' Service and the Adopt-A-Family plan asked volunteers to write and send small packages to designated European "pen-pals," without a specific monetary commitment. These programs were created to build relationships between American Jews and the surviving Jews of Europe, particularly the children, and sought to welcome children back into the Jewish community by supporting Jewish orphanages.

Similarly, Rescue Children, Inc. initiated an "Adopt-a-Child" program that paired child survivors with sponsors in America.³ Established by Vaad Hatzala, an emergency committee created by the Union of Orthodox Rabbis of the United States and Canada, Rescue Children supported child survivors in religious children's homes across Europe. The organization, chaired by Herbert Tenzer, asked "Foster Parents" to donate \$365/year (\$1/day) to support their child. As in the WJC programs, Rescue Children also encouraged donors to write letters, send small packages, and develop personal relationships with their child.⁴ Yet, Rescue Children focused

³ Rescue Children was established as part of Vaad Hatzala. For more about Vaad Hatzala, see Alex Grobman, *Battling for Souls: The Vaad Hatzala Rescue Committee in Post-Holocaust Europe* (Jersey City, NJ: KTAV Pub. House, 2004).

⁴ The launch letter for the organization states: "Children cannot be dealt with like adults. They need education and training. They need the love and affection which we, in America, can bring to them even though it is only through our support and by means of correspondence, occasional remembrance, and birthday gifts... Thus we create for the

more on publicity efforts, group adoptions (in which 100 children were adopted by companies or organizations), and celebrity endorsements. These efforts popularized the program and secured pledges, but minimized individual relationship building.

As Rose's letter demonstrates, these kinds of adoption programs brought narratives of the Holocaust into American homes while publicity efforts amplified the reach of such eyewitness accounts. These projects, designed to send emotional and material support to the orphans of Europe also brought stories of survivors to America and invited American Jewish sponsors to empathize with the wartime and post-war experiences of these youngsters. The exchanges initiated by these programs – of personal stories for financial and emotional support – will be examined in this chapter as a necessary link between American Jewish donors, organizations, and survivors.

Recognizing the relationship between donors and recipients as one of mutual exchange reflects a shift in humanitarian aid that occurred in the interwar period in conjunction with the professionalization of social work.⁵ These relationships also offer a contrast to the anonymous giving and impersonal volunteerism of the SOS clothing drive. This chapter draws from scholarship about humanitarianism to position the adoption-like programs of Jewish organizations in the postwar period as part of the trend away from anonymous, hierarchical aid work, even while mass volunteerism among Americans and American Jews collected thousands

orphan a tie with the outside world, giving the orphan new hope and a new incentive in life." Letter from Herbert Tenzer, undated, 1, Box 14, Folder 6, Rescue Children Papers (RCP), Yeshiva University Special Collections.

⁵ Catherine Varchaver was trained as a social worker during this humanitarian shift and contributed to the field by presenting at Social Work Conferences and publishing in journals. Catherine Varchaver, "Rehabilitation for European Jewish Children through Personal Contact," *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol XXIV, no 4, June 1948, 408-411 and Catherine Varchaver, "The Letters of European Jewish Children," *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, 23:2 (December 1946), 119-124.

of pounds of needed material goods. As Samuel Moyn explains, philanthropic and charitable activism was traditionally underpinned by “a more hierarchical...language of humanitarianism” in order to “justify the deployment of compassionate aid without undermining the imperialist attitudes and projects.”⁶ Establishing one-to-one relationships defied a strictly hierarchical dynamic and allowed some survivors agency in how they presented their own Holocaust experiences. Yet, the dual intention of sending material to survivors and building one-to-one relationships often required organizations to choose one over the other. Rescue Children tended to shift their priority to raising enough money to support their religious homes, while Varchaver and the Child Care Division of WJC focused on relationship building and ended the fundraising elements of their programs as early as 1947.⁷

The narratives analyzed in this chapter reveal a deep concern for children and the nuclear family, and in this way, contribute to a broader conversation about children in the postwar world. In 1956, Malcolm Proudfoot already recognized that the attention given to children after the war far outweighed the number of children that survived Nazi oppression.⁸ In *Lost Children*, historian Tara Zahra similarly argues that children became symbols of all DPs, representing both dislocation and postwar renewal.⁹ This was especially true for Jewish orphans who were the

⁶ Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010) 33.

⁷ In 1947, due to an agreement with the United Jewish Appeal, the WJC Child Care Division discontinued the Foster-Parent’s Plan. The Women’s Division of American Jewish Congress agreed to stop fundraising for their Child Care project in exchange for necessary funds from the JDC of Greater New York. Foster parents were encouraged to continue writing to and sending gifts to their child. Letters from Mrs. Arthur R. Herska to Division Chapter Presidents, Foster Parent Plan Chairmen, and Treasurers, April 17, 1947 and April 22, 1947 and Letter from Mrs. Arthur R. Herska to Foster Parents, May 5, 1947, Box D72, File 8, WJC/AJA.

⁸ Malcolm Proudfoot, *European Refugees, 1939-1952: A Study in Force Population Movement* (Evanston, Ill: Northwestern University Press, 1956).

⁹ Tara Zahra, *The Lost Children: Reconstructing Europe’s Families After World War II*, (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011), 159. For more about children as symbols of renewal in postwar Europe see also Daniella

focus of Jewish fundraising materials, ad campaigns, and projects like those considered here. Children were featured because they appeared to be "moving and believable witnesses" and provoked the feelings of family that were so prevalent in postwar America.¹⁰ The consistent use of images of children in fundraising and philanthropic publicity materials suggests that they served as powerful figures of survival that provoked compassion and action from American donors. Even WJC programs that provided aid to adults worked to bring families back together in postwar Europe.¹¹

To best understand the kinds of narratives constructed about and by survivors through these projects, the chapter will closely examine the "adoption" programs of the WJC Child Care Division and Rescue Children in light of efforts across the American Jewish landscape to create direct relationships with survivors and facilitate legal adoptions where possible. The letters and life histories from the children in Europe, both the original narratives and those excerpted in various publicity materials, offer a way to explore early Holocaust survivor stories as well as the complexities of philanthropic relationships and the impact these activities had on how survivors were initially portrayed to American audiences. As will be shown, the philanthropic network that connected donors, organizations, and survivors defined these narratives according to American values, representing survivors through truncated and edited narratives that featured hope over despair.

Doron, "In the best interest of the child: Family, youth, and identity among postwar French Jews, 1944-1954 (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2009).

¹⁰ Zahra asserts that the family unit was central to postwar reconstruction and that images of the nuclear family "pervade popular images of Europe and the United States in the immediate postwar period." Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 19. For more about children as symbols and witnesses to the Holocaust, see, Mark M. Anderson, "The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust," *Jewish Social Studies* 14:1 (Fall 2007) 1- 22, 1.

¹¹ As will be explored later in the chapter, the Adopt-A-Family plan was initiated in 1946 to fulfill the goal of reuniting Jewish families, by providing aid and friendship to children living with their parents or relatives in Europe. Report of Child Care Division, May 28, 1947, Box D74, File 6, WJC/AJA.

Postwar enthusiasm for adoption

The Child Care Division and Rescue Children were not alone in creating “adoption”-like programs. ORT (Organization for Rehabilitation and Training) created a Guardianship plan that allowed supporters to sponsor individual survivors to enroll in ORT classes;¹² the non-sectarian Foster Parent’s Plan for War Children, led by Edna Blue, asked for \$180/year to support one child;¹³ and the National Council of Jewish Women sponsored children’s homes across Europe, supporting the education and living expenses of children in the homes.¹⁴ Nor were these projects unique in their appropriation of “adoption” terminology: the Jewish Labor Committee established a Child Adoption Program and the Synagogue Council of America created an Adopt-a-Synagogue program.¹⁵ B’nai B’rith initiated an “Adopt-a-Family Abroad” program in response to interest from their members who were eager to open up correspondence with other B’nai

¹² ORT, the Organization for Rehabilitation and Training, offered training classes to DPs in Europe to train for employment. Vocational schools were established across postwar Europe with the first one opening in Landsberg DP camp in August 1946. Classes ranged from metal machining, shoemaking, carpentry, to automobile motor repair, typesetting, watch repair and agricultural training.

¹³ Other non-sectarian groups, such as Save the Children, had similar sponsorship programs, but I include the Foster Parent’s Plan here because they appealed to the JDC in Europe to be paired up with Jewish children. In fact, some of their donors asked to be paired with Jewish children specifically. The JDC did not participate in these kinds of sponsorship programs and they particularly criticized the Foster Parent’s plan for only giving the children \$4/month if they lived in an institution or \$7/month if they lived at home. Letter from Lotte Marcuse, June 22, 1945 and Letter #4565, 45/54, #1625, JDC-NY.

¹⁴ “My Four Year Story: 1949 – 1953” by Mrs. Louis Broido, Box 28, Folder 1, NCJW/AJHS.

¹⁵ The Jewish Labor Committee’s Child Department sponsored a Care for Children Overseas program, but letters referred to the “Adoption” program. They employed quotation marks around the word adoption to designate the appropriation of the term. The program asked JLC members to give \$300 to sponsor a child. The children received \$15 per month and packages of clothing, books and other items. These packages were sent directly from the JLC offices and therefore were not dependent on donors. Letter from ZJ Lichtenstein and B. Tabachinsky to Mr. Frederichs, April 4, 1949, Box 118, Folder: Sarah Aizenberg, JLC/USHMM.

B'rith members.¹⁶ American Jews of diverse affiliations sought and constructed relationships with survivors through these programs as a means of connecting with survivors and working on a small scale to ensure a Jewish future. As opposed to the anonymous giving connected with SOS, these direct sponsorship programs individualized the postwar work of rehabilitation.

As the adoption motif signals, these programs were largely concerned with children, many of whom were orphaned during the war, but donors were also interested in rebuilding synagogues, schools, and families. Programs that facilitated relationships between “adopted children” and “foster parents” tried to create the structure of a nuclear family across the Atlantic Ocean. As the letters written by children will show, they also used the language of family when imagining their foster families and pen-pals. The motif of adoption in these programs was not just an idea that modeled parenting. In many instances, the desire for actual adoption was real. European-Jewish Children’s Aid received an increase in inquiries at this time about adoption.¹⁷ The Free Synagogue Adoption Committee, founded by Louise Wise in 1916, sought to find actual adoption homes for the Jewish children of Europe. Yet, these organizations struggled to secure legal adoptions because of numerous obstacles. Chief among these problems was the limitation of immigration quotas in America. Although the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 authorized 2,000 new immigration visas, this did not increase the number of small children (most

¹⁶ The program was launched in March 1946 and invited B'nai B'rith Lodges or individual members to donate \$8/month for at least 3 months. B'nai B'rith pledged to send packages to their family and asked that the individual keep up correspondence with them. Letter from Reuben Frieman to Maurice Bernhardt, March 27, 1946, 45/54, #1517, JDC-NY.

¹⁷ Letter from Dr. Henri Elfenbein, JDC to Mr. J.B. Woodward, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 45/54, #1033, JDC-NY. The European-Jewish Children’s Fund was founded in 1934 as the German-Jewish Children’s Fund in an attempt to rescue German Jewish children from Nazi Germany. At that time, the effort was a joint project of multiple Jewish communal organizations. The organization changed its name in 1942 in response to federal refugee policies and to better facilitate coordination with United States Committee for the Care of European Children. Throughout the war and after, the EJCF served as sponsor for many orphaned children and established them in foster homes in the US.

wanted for adoption) who emigrated to the U.S., nor did it open a significant number of visas for the majority of survivors.¹⁸

A number of other impediments to adoption affected the specific cases of young survivors. First, children continued to be reunited with their parents as the postwar years went on. In 1945 and 1946, it was not yet clear which children were, in fact, orphans. Additionally, most children who survived had a relative who survived somewhere in the world, even if their parents perished. These relatives often claimed the children within a few years after the war. Second, many young survivors were brought to Israel by Zionist organizations like Hadassah or emigrated illegally in the first few years after the war and, once there, were not eligible for adoption in the U.S. Additionally, many Jewish children after the war ended up in orphanages sponsored by European governments that discouraged international adoptions.¹⁹ So, there were very few children eligible for adoption by American parents.²⁰ These factors resulted in a greater perception of orphaned children than were actually available for adoption.

¹⁸ For more about the DP Act and its limitations, see Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust Politics Britain, the United States and Jewish Refugees, 1945-1948* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

¹⁹ For in depth examinations of national interest and postwar adoption in Europe, see Daniella Doron, "'A Drama of Faith and Family': Familialism, Nationalism, and Ethnicity among Jews in Postwar France," *Journal of Jewish Identities* 4:2 (July 2011) 1-27.

²⁰ Any number of letters in the JDC (and other archives) reiterate these reasons, some of which changed over the first five years of the postwar period. A letter dated April 13, 1945 from Moses A. Leavitt of the JDC to Mr. H. Lesnie of New York stated, "The situation is not very clear, as I told you, since no one knows as yet how many children are truly orphans, how many have close relatives who are prepared to adopt them and bring them up and what the attitude is of the various governmental authorities toward the emigration of the children." The letter additionally explains that although 200 Palestine certificates had been arranged for orphans living in France, "the French government announced it would not grant exit permits to children unless the consent of their parents to their emigration had been secured. Since the parents have been deported, it is not possible to secure their consent and for the time being their emigration from France is suspended." Letter from Leavitt to Lesnie, April 13, 1945, 45/54, #1032, JDC-NY. And, in a letter almost ten years later, dated May 5, 1954, Dr. Henri Elfenbein of the JDC Office in Geneva wrote to Mr. JB Woodward, the High Commissioner for Refugees at the UN that, "In most countries, the surviving relatives have been appointed as the guardians of the child, and the relatives are, of course, reluctant to agree to adoption of the child and particularly when this would mean the child's departure abroad and overseas. In addition, in recent years the requests for adoption have been far in excess of the number of children available for adoption." Letter from Elfenbein to Woodward, 1954, 45/54, #1033, JDC-NY.

Nonetheless, public perception fueled a “really serious and pressing” interest in getting young children to the U.S., often with the intention of adopting them.²¹ This perception was based on newspaper articles that focused on the orphaned children and philanthropic organizations that employed images and stories of children in their appeals. Articles, such as “We found a baby Bonanza” published in November 1945 in *Woman’s Day*, “The saddest thing in Europe are these children,” in the *NY Post* on July 11, 1947, and “Hell’s Orphan” in the *Saturday Evening Post* on October 23, 1948, spread awareness of the struggles facing young orphans in postwar Europe and increased interest in adoption.²² Such articles focused American attention on orphaned children and argued that adoption could save them from the chaos of postwar Europe.

Yet, the attention given to children at that time far outweighed the number of children that survived Nazi oppression.²³ This was especially true for war orphans as described in these articles and Jewish war orphans that were the focus of Jewish fundraising materials, ad campaigns, and donation requests. Children were featured because they appeared to be “moving and believable witnesses” and provoked the feelings of family that were so prevalent in postwar America.²⁴ As the most visible group of Displaced Persons in the United States, children became

²¹ Letter from Lotte Marcuse of European Jewish Children’s Aid to Dr. Joseph Schwartz of the JDC, June 22, 1945, 45/54, #1032, JDC-NY.

²² In a letter dated October 28, 1948 from the *Saturday Evening Post* to the JDC, the editor of the paper explains that in response to an article they published “about the lost children of Europe, ‘Hell’s Orphans’ by Joseph Wechsberg, they are getting more and more letters from people who would like to adopt European children.” Letter dated October 28, 1948, 45/54, #1034, JDC-NY. Lotte Marcuse, Director of Placements at European-Jewish Children’s Aid, described such articles as “unfortunate” and categorized letters that detailed the despair of the European Jewish Children as “ill-advised.” Marcuse found the public fervor for adoption to be disruptive and problematic to their efforts. Letter dated June 22, 1945, 45/54 #1032, JDC-NY.

²³ Proudfoot, *European Refugees*; Zahra *Lost Children*, 8.

²⁴ Tara Zahra asserts that the family unit was central to postwar reconstruction and that images of the nuclear family

symbols of all DPs and Jewish survivors. Zahra argues that humanitarian and immigration offices privileged children over adults not “because children were seen as more vulnerable or innocent” but because they were “seen as more assailable to homogenous nation-states than adults.”²⁵ The consistent use of images of children in fundraising and philanthropic publicity materials suggests that they served as powerful figures of survival that provoked compassion and action from American donors.

In addition, Zahra’s assertion that children were also seen as vessels for nationalism was similarly reflected in the Jewish case. Given the destruction of the Jewish population in Europe, Jewish children became the hope for a Jewish future. As Catherine Varchaver asserted in a 1946 report, “For us, a child cannot be considered entirely “saved” until he is conscious of being a human being and a Jew who, since he cannot replace the missing, will at least make every effort to preserve our heritage.”²⁶ Towards this end, the Child Care Division sought to save Jewish children through personal contact, but also through Jewish education. As will be discussed later in the chapter, Rescue Children similarly dedicated their efforts to ensuring that the children in their care would return to Judaism and live observant lives.

Even organizations that did not support direct correspondence programs or employ the language of family in their appeals relied on images and stories of children to appeal to donors.

“pervade popular images of Europe and the United States in the immediate postwar period.” Zahra, *The Lost Children*, 19 and Anderson, “The Child Victim as Witness to the Holocaust,” 1. Anderson embeds his argument that Holocaust stories about children and families have been the major catalysts for mainstream Holocaust recognition in the work of Peter Novick. Although my study confronts Novick’s assertions about silence in the early postwar period, Anderson’s recognition of the place of children as key witnesses for American consumption of the Holocaust is apt even for material not directed at mainstream audiences.

²⁵ Zahra, *Lost Children*, 20-21.

²⁶ “Report on the situation of the Jewish children in France and on the activities of the Children’s service of the Congress,” 7, July 11, 1946, Paris, Box 87, Folder 13, WJC/AJA.

Both Hadassah and the JDC, organizations deeply engaged with the refugee crisis in postwar Europe, chose not to create or endorse “adoption”-type programs.²⁷ Both groups cited similar reasoning behind avoiding such programs: they unfairly favored some children over others, correspondents lost interest and abandoned their sponsors, and responding to the scale of the larger crisis required more than one-to-one relationships. Hadassah also argued that adoption-like programs went against their long-standing policies and were contrary to the ideals of Henrietta Szold.²⁸ The JDC, serving as the administration for most of the Jewish postwar European aid efforts, remained focused on larger goals abroad and asked constituents to trust its strategy for dispersing goods and gifts equally to families and children across Europe.²⁹ To discourage any groups interested in “adopting” and yet still maintain donor loyalty, JDC asserted its larger efforts as the best way to help survivors.³⁰

²⁷ Henrietta Buchman, Executive Assistant at the New York JDC office, recognized that many other groups, “indulge in the practice of establishing contact with individual children through correspondence and sending packages. We, here, have tried as far as possible to discourage this activity, but as you can understand, it is most difficult to control.” Letter from Henrietta Buchman to Miss Dorothy Levy, Paris JDC, August 6, 1948, 45/54, #1628, JDC-NY.

²⁸ In a letter dated February 25, 1946, Hans Beyth responded to a request for special exemption to the policy, writing, “Whilst we fully appreciate the feelings of the people in this instance...it was a matter of which Henrietta Szold felt strongly and expressed herself at some length from time to time.” Letter from Hans Beyth to Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, February 25, 1946, Box 13, Folder 73, YAP/Hadassah.

²⁹ For example, in a letter to Mrs. H. Hagar of Brooklyn, NY, the JDC explained, “The best and most effective method of getting supplies to these people is through the general program of the Joint Distribution Committee, which is providing for the feeding of these people, the distribution of clothing and other items which they need very badly. In a large-scale program of this kind, we have found that the most efficient method is to send supplies from here and other counties in bulk to be distributed by the local Jewish relief agencies or our own personnel where no such agencies exist.” Letter to Mrs. H. Hagar, November 26, 1945, 45/54, #1268, JDC-NY.

³⁰ As Henrietta Buchman wrote to Mrs. Louise Thalheimer, Executive Director of the Little Rock, Arkansas Jewish Welfare Agency, “The most helpful and constructive thing which the group of young people in your community might do would be to contribute funds to the United Jewish Appeal from which the Joint Distribution Committee derives its funds. Through JDC’s support of schools, child-care institutions, and other activities, which benefit children, JDC is presently assisting some 50,000 children in the overseas countries. The per capita cost for maintaining a child is approximately \$50 a month.” Letter from Buchman to Thalheimer, April 16, 1954, 45/54, #1033, JDC-NY.

Nonetheless, children were central to communications efforts by both groups. Hadassah fundraised in America for the Youth Aliyah project, which transported children from wartime and post-war Europe to Palestine/Israel. The publicity for the program exclusively featured Youth Aliyah children. In 1948, the United Jewish Appeal launched a Children's Appeal for \$250,000,000. For this initiative, the public relations office collected, edited, and packaged 100 short biographies and pictures of children from JDC-supported institutions in Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, Poland and Rumania. A cover letter sent with the 100 biographies noted, "support of these child-care institutions is part of the overall JDC child-care program," so that their fundraising efforts around children was part of overall JDC work.³¹ Both Hadassah and JDC understood the value of children's narratives in appealing to donors and relied on the images and narratives of children for publicity purposes. However, both groups supported child survivors through long-established programs or core organizational initiatives rather than through projects that directly responded to the interest of their constituents.

In fact, by rejecting all direct sponsorship programs, Hadassah and JDC dismissed public interest and denied donor requests. In February 1946, a family wrote to Hadassah hoping to support a young girl in Palestine who resembled their daughter, who had recently died. The young girl was six years old with blonde hair and blue eyes and her father was eager to "assume the responsibility for one refugee child" who was also blonde and blue-eyed by sponsoring her emigration from Europe to Palestine as well as her housing and education. He also hoped to be in touch with the young girl he supported. Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, chairman of the National Youth Aliyah Committee of Hadassah, hoped to make an exception to their standard practice for this grieving father, but Hans Beyth, acting director of the Jewish Agency (which managed the

³¹ "The Children's Appeal for \$250,000,000 for the United Jewish Appeal," March 3, 1948, 45/54, #1038, JDC-NY.

Youth Aliyah program on the ground), responded that “We cannot become officially a part to a single case of this description because to do so would act against the best interests of the movement in general and the child in particular.”³² In this way, Hadassah and JDC bucked the trend of so many Jewish organizations in the postwar period that converted the interest and enthusiasm for personal connections with survivors into adoption programs that fostered one-to-one relationships.

Emotional aid and the quest for family

A heated exchange of letters between Henrietta Buchman, Executive Assistant of the JDC, and Varchaver illustrated the competition for resources that justified the consistent rejection of these programs by JDC and Hadassah. On October 27, 1948, Buchman responded to Varchaver’s initial request that individual correspondence continue after JDC took over administration of WJC children’s homes. Buchman wrote, “We recognize the psychological appeal of a program such as you described. However, it has been our experience that these programs fall short of meeting the fundamental needs of the children.”³³ Furthermore, she argued, some “luck and chance factors...determine[d] the relationship” between a donor and an adopted child; circumstances that JDC felt would be “unhealthy.” Buchman concluded by claiming that the JDC staff in Europe believed that the “‘adoption’ system violates [the] principle of equitable distribution among the largest number of Jewish children and the ‘adoption’ system results in many obvious inequities with which we cannot associate ourselves.” The Child Care

³² Letter from Rose Elkin, President of the Newburyport Amesbury Hadassah Chapter, to Mrs. Wyzanski, November 21, 1946, and Letter from Hans Beyth to Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, Box 13, Folder 73, YAP/Hadassah

³³ Letter from Henrietta Buchman to Catherine Varchaver, October 27, 1948, 45/54, #1034, JDC-NY.

Division records confirm that these concerns were problems faced by Varchaver in facilitating such projects. Some children benefited more from generous sponsors while many foster parents and pen-pals lost interest over time.

Yet, Varchaver's response, dated November 9, 1948, expressed her deep conviction that the Jewish children, and adults, in postwar Europe needed moral support through personal correspondence. She recognized that her proposed plan would not respond to all the material needs of the children, but could "supplement the insufficient help presently given by the local European organizations."³⁴ This sharp reply countered Buchman's assertion that the Correspondent's Program fell short of providing "fundamental needs." Varchaver continued, "It is my opinion that the fundamental needs of the children include not only their physical, but even their emotional needs...this service provides ample opportunity to meet the emotional needs of the children through self expression as well as security and social integration."³⁵ Varchaver lost the battle for the continued practice of correspondence when the WJC turned administration of their homes over to the JDC, but this exchange reveals a central ideological tension between the two organizations and the value of correspondence in the postwar period as fulfilling a need that was not addressed by the primary aid organization of the time.

Varchaver's letter also highlighted her own belief in the power of correspondence and the support of Americans who felt rewarded through participation in these pen-pal relationships. She made clear that even if her program did not fulfill the "fundamental needs" of young survivors, American Jews were inspired to seek adoption opportunities and often found sponsorship programs a fulfilling alternative to legal adoption. As Mrs. C.L. of Kansas, Nebraska wrote to the

³⁴ Letter from Catherine Varchaver to Henrietta Buchman, November 9, 1948, 45/54, #1034, JDC-NY.

³⁵ Ibid.

Child Care Division office, “We are anxious to do our bit, and though we all contribute to the various drives there is a satisfaction in doing something for someone personally.”³⁶ The interest of American Jews to connect with Jewish survivors is clear in this letter and reflected in the number of Jews who participated in these kinds of efforts.

This exchange shows that the WJC Child Care Division programs focused on the “psychological and social” needs of the children as a supplement to material needs.³⁷ Both elements of the Child Care Division’s work emerged as early as the division’s first initiative, the “Chanukah Campaign for European Jewish Children,” in September 1945. The Child Care Division publicized its plan to send packages of clothing, food, and small toys to Jewish children in postwar Europe and establish relationships between the recipients and American Jews. In only two months, the small division collected 7,400 packages, 6,000 lbs of used clothing, and approximately \$7,000 of donations, delivering 10,000 presents to individual children.³⁸ A small message attached to each package underscored the objective of creating individual relationships and sending moral support.³⁹ The Chanukah Gift Campaign not only “awakened the sympathies of large segments of American Jewry to the needs of our European brethren,” but did so within the WJC’s mandate to support Jewish children and reconnect them to a Jewish life.⁴⁰

³⁶ Letter dated July 14, 1948, as quoted in *Ibid.*

³⁷ The WJC Relief and Rehabilitation report in May 1947 included the following introduction to the Child Care Division Programs: “The realization that the material relief for European Jewish children could not be separated from the psychological and social rehabilitation prompted the Child Care Division to start simultaneously work on two projects: The Foster Parents plan and the Correspondents’ Service.” Report, May 1947, 10, Box D3, File 5, WJC/AJA.

³⁸ Relief and Rescue Department Report, August – November 1945, 18 – 19, Box D3, Folder 3, WJC/AJA.

³⁹ These notes also mirror those attached to the Victory Clothing Drive examined in chapter three and suggest that the Correspondence program should also be seen in light of early Cold War efforts to send friendship abroad.

⁴⁰ Correspondent’s Service for Jewish Children Report, April 1946, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

Rescue Children also sought to return children to Jewish life and, as an Orthodox organization, considered itself the only institution that prioritized a religiously Jewish life for the young survivors in their care. Yet, they struggled to raise the necessary funds to support their children's home and were accused of not maintaining standards of cleanliness and order at the homes. As such, the focus of their efforts became fundraising rather than relationship building and they reached beyond the American Orthodox community for donors. Although some foster parents sent gifts and letters, the organization had little communication with its sponsors after they paid their pledge and did not follow up with sponsors that made no effort to correspond with their adopted child. In pursuit of their fundraising goals, Rescue Children started securing larger gifts that supported more children, but such group gifts did not establish individual relationships. Often the only link between the adopted child and the sponsor in America was an adoption certificate given to the donor.⁴¹

The strategies of the two groups also differed in their response to the challenge of rebuilding families in postwar Europe. The Child Care Division of WJC developed the Adopt-A-Family plan to allow children who had been lucky enough to be reunited with one or both parents to live as a family. Many of these children were still living in children's homes years after liberation because their parents could not afford to take care of them. The Adopt-a-Family initiative supplemented JDC aid and provided enough support for families to be fully reunited. Rescue Children, on the other hand, often took children away from their parents in order to provide them with a Jewish education. For example, Jakov Reichmann and his sisters, Luba and Chana, were taken from their home and their mother in Poland and brought to a Rescue

⁴¹ The certificate included a framed picture of the child and a very brief biography. Pictures of "foster parents" with their certificate and copies of certificates, Box 13, Folder 24, RCP/Yeshiva.

Children's home in Belgium where they could better be cared for. The Reichmann family survived the war by escaping to Siberia, where the father died of starvation, but the mother and three children managed to stay together. The family was only separated after the war by Rescue Children.⁴² David Herckowicz was also separated from his family after the war when his parents placed him in a Rescue Children home so that he could live a Jewish life. The Herckowicz' survived the war in Limburg, France and could not leave after the war. However, Limburg had no Jewish community and David's father feared he would have no Jewish education there.⁴³

Yet, the priority of Jewish education did not negate the centrality of family for Rescue Children. In fact, they worked to reunite families and publicized around the world to find remaining relatives for their children. Herbert Tenzer recounted a reunion story about Lazar Goldblum, the young child that he and his wife sponsored that complicated the intentions of Rescue Children in response to families. At the 1947 Rescue Children's Fundraising Dinner, Tenzer explained that Lazar was one of six siblings and had been saved in the war by a German woman who found a seven-month-old baby beside a dead man. The baby, Lazar, was sent to live with a non-Jewish family in France and, thanks to an envelope of papers found on the deceased man, knew the names of his siblings and parents. Lazar was six when the Tenzer's "adopted" him and began sending him gifts.

Around this time, Rescue Children received a letter from a man in Bolivia who had heard about Rescue Children from a Spanish newspaper and hoped they might help him track down his brother's family in Poland – a family of 6 children. Here, the two stories overlap. The man in

⁴² Life History, Jakov Reichman, Box 1, Folder 1/4 – 24, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁴³ David's case worker noted, "As David cannot have a Jewish education in Limburg, the parents have placed him in our home." Life History, David Herckowicz, Box 4, Folder 924, RCP/Yeshiva.

Bolivia, named Goldblum, was miraculously the brother of Lazar's father. But, the story continued:

After we wrote to this man in Bolivia, he said he would be willing to adopt this child and take him to Bolivia to live with him. By the time we were able to answer this letter, we heard from Polan[d] and found a sister and a brother of this boy who had registered with the Jewish committee. We promptly brought them to France and reunited three members of the family. Later we brought two sisters from Sweden to join these three and we had five. Then we found one boy who had come out of Austria in the American Zone in Germany and now we had six. With the last group who trudged 800 miles from Russia, from Poland and Warsaw and Czechoslovakia, the mother of these six children came and registered and asked if there was any way she could find out if any of her children were living. By a circuitous route through the Chief Rabbis Council in London the children were located and the mother and children were reunited in France. Successively we wrote to the uncle in Bolivia and wrote him the story. Finally the problem became too great for him to take care of. We agreed to advance the money and he agreed to take them, give a home to them and education to the young ones.⁴⁴

As Tenzer described, the efforts of and publicity for Rescue Children, brought together a family of seven and gave them the opportunity to emigrate to Bolivia. This story portrays Tenzer's commitment to reuniting families, but still highlights the organization's priority that war orphans live a Jewish life and receive a Jewish education.

This long quote also reveals the kinds of stories that Jewish leaders told about survivors at the time. Like so many of the stories detailed in this study, Tenzer told a long narrative about the postwar. The effort to reunite this family – and the fortuitous nature of its success – is a tale of postwar restoration that weaves in the displacement and loss of the war years. The miracle of reunion only made sense in light of the Holocaust, which was well understood by his audience. This tale, and the others like it, defined Holocaust narratives through postwar Jewish philanthropy, celebrating the success of American Jewish intervention in postwar Europe. In this

⁴⁴ Transcript, 1947 Rescue Children Dinner, Box 15, Folder 3 RCP/YESHIVA.

way, these stories allowed American Jews, who had been spared the destruction of war, to feel part of the postwar redemption.

Philanthropic relationships as a network of transmission

The letters exchanged in the Child Care Division programs and the life histories of the Rescue Children orphans solicited and disseminated narratives about Jewish war orphans to a network of donors, pen-pals, and volunteers as well as to a broader American public. The narratives excerpted or edited from these forms of communication were employed to solicit aid through fundraising letters, advertisements, and publicity newsletters. In so doing, they also served to construct survivor stories in America, establishing a relationship between donor and recipient that was often more complex than an anonymous giving of funds or materials. The stories written about survivors, and especially those written by survivors, became the nexus of these relationships and the Child Care Division of the WJC and Rescue Children became intermediaries, shaping how these stories were conveyed to their audiences.

A letter of June 16, 1946 from Mrs. Dalva in Marseille, France to Miss Bess B. Hain of Wrightwood, California demonstrates some of the complexities inherent in the relationships between donors, survivors, and these organizations. Upon being assigned Robert Dalva as her foster child, Mrs. Hain wrote a letter offering her support and sent it through the Child Care Division office. The seven-year-old boy wrote only a short note to his foster mother, but, Mrs. Dalva, Robert's grandmother, better expressed what she and the child had lived through. Yet, the exchange could not be direct between Mrs. Dalva and Mrs. Hain. First, the letter had to be translated from French to English at the Child Care Division Office. On July 31, 1946 (over a

month after the response letter was written), Mrs. Varchaver sent the translated letter to Mrs. Hain, allowing her to read Mrs. Dalva's gratitude that the Hains had taken an interest in Robert.⁴⁵ Mrs. Dalva's letter then explained, "how the misfortune happened," presumably in response to a question in Mrs. Hain's initial letter. Mrs. Dalva wrote that her daughter and son-in-law, Robert's parents, were taken from their apartment in a raid on the night of January 23, 1943 and since then she had not heard from them. The translation included Robert's brief note of thanks in a few lines below his grandmother's.⁴⁶

Mrs. Dalva played a crucial role in the relationship, communicating for a young boy who could not share all that she did, including the great appreciation for the support offered by Mrs. Hain. This exchange also conveys the challenges of direct communication in the postwar period. Language differences and unpredictability in mail service across Europe delayed responses between pen-pals and slowed the potential for relationship building.⁴⁷ Yet, these programs expanded the circle of relationships, as letters contained multiple writers and were passed through many hands upon arrival.

⁴⁵ Delays in the mail were a constant problem for the Child Care Division. Many foster parents and correspondents complained that they never heard back from their child in Europe or that the letters crossed in the mail. Wartime destruction slowed the mail delivery process, particularly in Central Europe and mail strikes also delayed communications. A letter from the Rescue Children archive reiterates that mail delays plagued these kinds of programs. Mrs. Bertha Levy Hermanos wrote a letter to the administrative office after a letter from her adopted son Daniel was delayed several months. She demanded to know, "Are you holding any other mail from the boy which was addressed to me?" The response from Rescue Children, dated February 5, 1948, indicated that the delay in mail was due to a mail strike in France and had nothing to do with their office. The mail in postwar Europe was unpredictable, yet the continued commitment of American donors and foster parents demanded reliability and consistency. Letter from Mrs. Bertha Levy Hermanos and Response, Box 3, File 625, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁴⁶ Translated Letter to Bess Hain, July 31, 1946, Box D81, File 1, WJC/AJA.

⁴⁷ The language barriers were addressed by a large number of volunteers working at the Child Care Division office in New York. Material for the Correspondent's Service indicate that the correspondents should write their first letter in English and then ask what language was best for continued communication.

Additionally, this letter reveals a variety of wartime experiences expressed in the postwar period and underscores the breadth of need Jews faced in postwar Europe. Although neither she nor Robert were deported, Mrs. Dalva conveyed the pain of the war years through the loss of her daughter and Robert's parents, writing, "...what hurts me deeply is that he remembers his father and mother very well and asks for them daily."⁴⁸ Robert, though not a survivor of a concentration camp or a hidden child, needed emotional support and his grandmother required financial aid to sustain them both. In the immediate postwar period, the "surviving Jews of Europe" were not only Jews who had returned from exile or from concentration camps; all Jews at the time had suffered under Nazism and needed aid. The broad reach of financial and, in these cases, emotional aid, responded to survivors who had suffered loss, displacement, and poverty by the Nazis in addition to those who had been deported or victimized. As such, survivors of Nazi atrocity were not only depicted as concentration camp survivors and the conception of a "survivor" was inclusive of all the surviving Jews in Europe, regardless of their specific wartime experiences.

Many letters sent from Jews in Europe through these programs similarly related their postwar needs to the telling of wartime experiences. Rose, the young Chemistry student in Budapest, explicitly identified the connection between writing about her Holocaust story and asking for aid by writing:

When I began to write to you I made it first to become material support. Therefore I gave you an account of the events of my deportation. I wrote about the sufferings of European Jews, etc. I made it, because I remembered the kindness of American Jews, whom I met in Germany, and who were so kind to us liberated Jews, as if they were our relatives...I was not disappointed, when I

⁴⁸ Translated Letter to Bess Hain, July 31, 1946, Box D81, File 1, WJC/AJA.

wrote to you. I received the support, packages, books, letters. You send them, as if you were my relative.⁴⁹

Rose, at 20 years old, was able to articulate the connection between telling about her “sufferings” and asking for support, but the letters of even young children show that initial expressions of Holocaust stories often incorporated some kind of aid request or philanthropic effort. Rose told her story to justify her needs and emotionally communicated that she was deserving of kindness. In other words, she framed her story to best align her needs with how she perceived the interests of American Jews. As Rose noted here, this was successful for motivating philanthropic giving. Rose’s letter also affirms that the language of family (here, “relative”) was central to how survivors understood the donor-recipient relationship.

Yet, not all of the letters from the survivors in Europe included detailed accounts like Rose’s. For example, the first “Bulletin of the Correspondence Program,” sent out in January 1946, included a letter from Robert S. in France who wrote, “I am a Jewish boy, 16 years old; my parents have been unfortunately deported by the Nazis, and I am living now in a Children’s home.”⁵⁰ His letter revealed no additional detail about the war years noting only that he was now an orphan. Instead, Robert focused on the importance of correspondence as a way to connect with people and find understanding. His letter continued, “As I have no family anymore, I would like very much to start a correspondence with a Jewish family who would understand what I suffered during these horrible years, and I will show myself grateful for the affection that they

⁴⁹ “Correspondent’s Service Bulletin,” 1, Vol 3 No 1-4, October 1948, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

⁵⁰ “Correspondent’ Service Bulletin,” 1:1, January 1946, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA. The original translation of Robert’s letter read, “I am a Jewish boy of 16 years of age who has gone through terrible experience and whose parents both, unfortunately, have been deported by the Nazis. As I have no one left, my most ardent desire is to belong to a family again. This is the reason I why I write to you today and I am sure you will give me a favorable answer.” Letter from Robert S. dated Limoges, November 11, 1945. Box D78, Folder 9, WJC/AJA.

will give me.”⁵¹ Robert’s letter succinctly expressed the relationship between the experience of suffering under Nazism and the desire for communication with those who could “understand” that was central to the work of the Child Care Division.

Robert’s letter also tied the interconnectivity of Holocaust narratives and correspondence to the expression of gratitude. As part of the pen-pal relationship Robert imagined, he would show his gratitude in response to kindness from an American family. Many excerpted letters in the Child Care Division newsletters reflect gratitude for the gifts sent, the letters written, and the attention paid. Zahra identifies this kind of appreciation as an expectation of sponsors and legal foster parents. She explains, “Refugee children were inculcated with the importance of adopting ‘American’ values, which meant gratitude” among other central values.⁵² The letters exchanged through the Correspondent’s Service and other programs illustrated Zahra’s assertion that American values were key components of the relationship between foster parents and adopted children. As such, the sponsorship relationships and the letters exchanged to sustain them serve as yet another way in which early survivor narratives were Americanized through communal efforts.⁵³

Additionally, Robert’s request to be paired with a family because he had none further reveals how the language and pursuit of family motivated survivors. The same is true for American donors; Robert’s intention to find a family that could in some way replace his lost

⁵¹ “Correspondent’ Service Bulletin,” 1:1, January 1946, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

⁵² Zahra, *Lost Children*, 77.

⁵³ Chapter one explores the idea of Americanization in depth. For more about the concept, see Alvin Rosenfeld, “The Americanization of the Holocaust,” in *Thinking About the Holocaust: After Half a Century*, ed. Alvin Rosenfeld (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), Michael Berenbaum, *After Tragedy and Triumph: Essays in Modern Jewish Thought and the American Experience* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), and the essays in Hilene Flanzbaum, *The Americanization of the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

family mirrored the request sent to Hadassah that was denied and that of a man from Illinois who wanted to donate \$10,000 towards giving \$10/week to two families in Europe because he “has no family overseas himself.”⁵⁴ In this particular case, the Joint responded that they didn’t support those kinds of direct aid projects. Nonetheless, both survivors and donors viewed these programs as opportunities to complete parts of their families that were lost or missing. This impulse on the part of the donor and recipient echoed the focus on family in the postwar milieu at large and may account for why these kinds of programs found ready participants on both sides of the ocean.

The impulse for rebuilding or refashioning a sense of family is also evident in the life histories written by young people in Rescue Children homes. Salomon Scoenberger wrote, “I didn’t find at home nobody only remembrances. So I beg you help me in beginning my life because I am very young.”⁵⁵ Like Robert’s letter, Scoenberger’s narrative ended with a request for help embedded in his own lack of family and home. He turned to America and the donors of Rescue Children to help him find a future. Scoenberger’s letter reflected Varchaver’s belief that letter writing (and sponsorship programs in general) could help children feel hope for the future.

Yet the life histories generated by Rescue Children were not all as hopeful as Scoenberger’s. In fact, most of the life histories, used to write bios for foster parents and shaped into advertisements, seem to be written from a template that provided little space for individual emotions. While the experiences were different and unique to each child, the expressions of how

⁵⁴ A letter dated July 13, 1945 from the Springfield, Illinois Jewish Federation to the New York JDC office stated that one of their larger donors was looking to aid “families with children, to be people who have always acknowledged their Jewishness, and to be people who could get themselves on an independent basis after this year’s support. Probably they should be families who plan to stay in Europe.” The letter concluded, “He has no family overseas himself, and thus wants to adopt two families, in addition to his regular contributions.” Box 13, Folder: Correspondence, 1945, JDC - Landsmanshaftn Department, YIVO.

⁵⁵ Life History, Salomon Scoenberger, Box 1, File 155, RCP/Yeshiva.

the children survived were highly regularized. For example, Abraham Samimi wrote, “Our family consisted of nine persons, now I remained with my sister, the others are killed by the Germans. Now we are alone without any help. This time being in comb [perhaps, camps?] we suffered very much. The Germans carried us from one place to another without a little bread and water.”⁵⁶ The life history of Rose Holender is identical to Samimi’s, including the same unknown word, “comb.”⁵⁷ Samimi’s life history continued, “I begin my life in Auswicz (sic) and finished in Mathausen where I was saved by the Americans in the year 1945.”⁵⁸ Similarly, Holender’s continued, “I begin life in comb Auswic (sic) and finished in Behenberg, where I was saved by the English in 1945.”⁵⁹

The letters read as though the children filled in a formulated narrative to detail their life histories, adding their own experiences to a set story.⁶⁰ This resulted in very different narratives than those communicated by Child Care Division “adoptees.” The letters from the Child Care Division communicate individual experiences and interests; they allowed survivors to express themselves to their pen-pal, often in their own language. By comparison, Rescue Children life

⁵⁶ Life History, Abraham Samimi, Box 1, File 156, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁵⁷ Holender’s Life History reads, “Our family consisted of nine persons, now I remained alone, the others were killed by the Germans. Now I am alone without any help. In this time being in comb we suffered very much, the Germans carried us from one place to another, without giving a little bread a little water.” Life History, Rose Holender, Box 1, File 157, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁵⁸ Life History of Abraham Samimi, Box 1, File 156, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁵⁹ Life History of Rose Holender, Box 1, File 157, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁶⁰ There was no evidence in the Rescue Children archive of a blank template form or a curriculum that included such a template, but the evidence of repeated life histories supports this claim.

histories record standardized stories and intended to appeal to American donors. The language appealed directly to donors by “begging” for help to “begin” “life” again.⁶¹

Turning tragedy into hope

Despite more open ended and individual letter writing, the WJC Child Care Division letters similarly appealed directly to donors and established a connection between the sense of gratitude expressed by the children and the motivations of philanthropic American Jews.⁶² The story of Oskar L.’s letter exemplifies the power survivor narratives had to motivate and the way organizations shaped survivor accounts to better address their constituents. Varchaver received a letter from Mrs. R. of Brisbane, Australia dated September 8, 1946 that included a copy of a letter from 13-year-old Oskar from Budapest.⁶³ Mrs. R. described Oskar’s letter as “...a pathetic and, at the same time, deeply tragic story. This letter created a miracle here. I don’t know how to say anymore. The letter speaks for itself. It has the power to break through the hard shell of human egoism and goes straight to the heart. You, too, might use this boy’s letter to support and facilitate the noble purpose of your work.”⁶⁴

⁶¹ In addition to the cited letter above from Salomon Scoenberger, Lea Grünsteinova wrote, “I beg you help me to begin my life” and Lenka Schoenberger wrote, “I am begging you to help me to full fill my wish. I hope you will do all you can for me.” Life History, Lea Grünsteinova, Box 1, Folder 166, RCP/Yeshiva and Life History, Lenka Schoenberger, Box 1, Folder 167, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁶² Although this specific case involves Jews from around the world, it reinforces the interconnectivity of the tragedy of the children’s stories and the interests of Jewish donors.

⁶³ The letter, which was copied and sent around to publicize the expansion of the program to Australia, included a note that Mrs. R. learned about the Correspondents’ program from an article in “Aufbau” from May 1946. Correspondent’ Service for European Jewish Children Extended to Australia!, Box D80, File 8, WJC/AJA.

⁶⁴ To prove that Oskar’s letter fulfilled the mission of the Correspondent’s Plan, Mrs. R.’s letter also included a request for a longer list of names of boys and girls to distribute to friends who were inspired by Oskar story. Ibid.

Varchaver did use Oskar's letter for publicity of the project's "noble" work. She distributed full copies of the letter, along with Mrs. R.'s introduction, throughout the WJC offices and included an excerpt of his letter in her presentation to the 1947 National Conference of Jewish Social Welfare and a subsequent paper published in *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly*. In the paper, she quoted Oskar as writing, "My dearest father and beloved brother of 12 were deported and we never heard from them again. I have not seen my mother's face otherwise but sad. However, when reading your letter, I saw my mother's face change, even smiling. She said, 'Tell me, my child, is this a dream or is it reality? Is there someone in the world who is willing to take an interest in us?'"⁶⁵ In this excerpt, Varchaver was able to communicate one small part of Oskar's story, the story of his father's deportation, but she does not include Oskar's experience other than his and his mother's joy and gratitude for the friendship and support offered by their correspondent.

Oskar's full letter detailed his own trials during the war. Oskar wrote to Mrs. R. about how his mother smuggled him out of the Budapest ghetto and into a Christian Red Cross Institute just before the bridges in the city were bombed. When he heard that Budapest had been liberated, he found his way back to the city, but could not find his mother. He wrote that he tried to find any relative, but all of their homes were empty and destroyed. He continued,

By coincidence, I was passing a big yard and there I saw a heap of 150 dead Jewish women. Somebody told me that this was a part of the Jewish victims. I stopped there almost frozen to the marrow and I began to sob. Dear Lord, is it possible that my mother is here? Terrible, terrible! What am I to do in this world?

⁶⁵ Catherine Varchaver, "Rehabilitation for European Jewish Children through Personal Contact," *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, Vol XXIV, no 4, June 1948, 408-411, 410.

No father, no brother! All relatives dead! I must put an end to my sufferings. And I decided to commit suicide.⁶⁶

As Oskar turned away, a woman approached him who knew his mother and told him that she was alive in a camp just outside Budapest. He was reunited with her and a few days later they returned to their bombed out home, where they continued to live.⁶⁷ The complete letter conveyed not only a brief summary of a Holocaust story, but a personal one, with deep emotion and unique details.

Varchaver distributed the longer story, but her presentation to social workers, ostensibly people trained to work with survivors like Oskar, filtered out the despair of his experiences and instead focused on the success of her correspondence program and aimed to inspire other social workers to continue projects based on emotional rehabilitation. Varchaver's paper suggests that she perceived the power of these stories not in individual accounts of desperation, but in the recovery from them. In fact, in reference to the Holocaust narratives of the European Jewish children, Varchaver noted, "In different ways, they all tell the same story."⁶⁸ The process of excerpting letters, as Varchaver did in her papers and in the Child Care Division newsletters, favored expressions of gratitude and joy that communicated that the children found "an atmosphere of warm friendship" through the pen-pal relationships without revealing the

⁶⁶ Correspondent' Service for European Jewish Children Extended to Australia!, Box D80, File 8, WJC Records, AJA.

⁶⁷ Oskar wrote of the reunion with his mother: "No novelist would be able to describe our reunion." Ibid.

⁶⁸ Catherine Varchaver, "The Letters of European Jewish Children," *The Jewish Social Service Quarterly*, 23:2 (December 1946), 119-124, 120.

emotional and physical challenges they lived through.⁶⁹ Varchaver's redaction emphasized that Holocaust survivors were often represented not through their unique trials under Nazism, but through a deliberate strategy to highlight the success of the philanthropic projects aimed to aid them in their postwar struggles.

By prioritizing hope over despair, the letters better fit the ethos of postwar America and conveyed the success of American humanitarianism. Rose's letters once again serve as a particularly articulate example of how American efforts at philanthropy were integrated into postwar expressions of the Holocaust. In the same 1947 conference paper, Varchaver excerpted from Rose's May 12, 1947 letter:

You American Jews send us, Europeans, presents and support, to unknown persons, living in the other half of the globe, as if it would be the most natural thing in the world. If it is unprecedented in history – what the Nazis did to European Jewry, so it is unprecedented, too, what the Americans did along economic lines after the war for the 'shoerit hapleta' for the rest of Jewry. We see in you the Jewish solidarity, the acceptance of the common Jewish fate. Knowing this, it is easier for us to accept your support and we hope that very soon, we shall not need it any more...⁷⁰

Rose was grateful for the economic support of American Jews and took to heart the sense of Jewish community the World Jewish Congress intended to spread.⁷¹ Additionally,

⁶⁹ An additional example: Tamara B. wrote from the Otwock Home in Poland, "We are pleased when packages arrive, not because they bring us clothing, but because they tell us that you remember us, and it makes us feel less lonely." Correspondent's Service Bulletin, 1:3-4, March-April 1946, 6, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

⁷⁰ Varchaver, "Rehabilitation of European Jewish Children," 411.

⁷¹ An additional voice echoing Rose's sentiments about Americans and Jewish solidarity: Twelve year old Adam S. wrote to his correspondent Mrs. H. on October 27, 1946: "I was very happy to receive your letter, not only because I saw that the American heart sends the words of affection even to such a far country, but also for I realize that there is human solidarity in the world." Correspondent's Service Bulletin, 2:1-3, January-March 1947, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

Rose succinctly articulated the American response to the desperation of the ‘Shoerit Hapleta’ as an heroic feat.⁷²

The template-based life histories of Rescue Children also asserted an overtly American bias. The biographical forms completed when children entered Rescue Children homes indicated that children most wanted to go to the United States (as opposed to Israel) and the life histories ended with requests to be brought to the U.S.⁷³ One young survivor, Olga Mermelstein represented the collected histories when she wrote, “Presently we are here alone, with mother but we have no future, therefore we would like to migrate to the United States of America.”⁷⁴ Like Varchaver’s celebration of the efforts of American donors, Rescue Children clearly sought to appeal to the notion that America was the only place for safe haven and that Americans alone were capable of helping these children. A Thanksgiving Day advertisement in the *New York Post* conveyed the connection Rescue Children sought to make between American values and “adopting” young orphans by claiming that the children who had been adopted “now know the real meaning of Thanksgiving. For they have nutritious food to eat, warm clothes to wear, cozy beds to sleep in. Most important of all, they *belong* to someone. They receive letters and tokens

⁷² The term *She'erit Hapletah* translated as “the surviving remains,” “the remnant,” or “the surviving remnant.” It was the name the survivors gave themselves inside the Displaced Persons camps. There is some discrepancy among DP scholars as to the boundaries of the community and what exact identity the term represents. Many argue that the term defines only those Jews inside DP camps. Here, Rose uses the term to indicate a wider community of surviving Jews of Europe, as she was living in Budapest outside any formal Displaced Person administration.

⁷³ Forms, Box 1, RCP/Yeshiva. (All of Box 1 contains forms and life histories of the children associated with Rescue Children.)

⁷⁴ Life History, Olga Mermelstein, Box 1, File 153, RCP/Yeshiva. Lea Grünsteinova, quoted above, similarly ended her life history by writing, “I beg you help me to begin my life and I think that my life can be only in America.” Life History, Lea Grünsteinova, Box 1, File 166, RCP/Yeshiva.

of love and affection from their new ‘parents’ in America.”⁷⁵ It was at once a reiteration of America’s success in aiding these children and a call to do more.⁷⁶

Both Rescue Children and the Child Care Division framed America as the place of the future, full of hope for survivors, and celebrated the generosity of donors.⁷⁷ Yet the tone for each is different. The war orphans supported by Rescue Children were represented as hopeless, lonely, and desperate in their current locations and dependent upon American Jews for rescue. On the other hand, Child Care Division framed survivors as grateful young people, full of hope and gratitude for compassionate Americans. The Child Care Division orphans were, in some ways, already Americanized because they were thankful and optimistic, whereas the orphans of Rescue Children still needed American saviors for uplift.

Rescue Children vies for mainstream American publicity

Nonetheless, for both the WJC and Rescue Children, images of the children they cared for became potent public symbols. The publicity strategies of both organizations reveals that detailed narratives about the emotional and physical suffering of children during the war were not nearly as powerful as images of war orphans. Public narratives about these adoption programs featured few details (if any) about young survivors and materials directed to non-Jewish audiences revealed even less specificity. Instead, the Child Care Division and Rescue

⁷⁵ “Thanksgiving – Wonderful Day” advertisement, New York Post, Tuesday, November 26, 1946, Box 16, Folder 9, RCP/Yeshiva. The following chapter will explore the use of Thanksgiving themes in telling stories about Holocaust survivors.

⁷⁶ The ad concludes, “These 100 children haven’t been forgotten! Let’s not forget the thousands of others... who are waiting...waiting...waiting...” Ibid.

⁷⁷ One young girl wrote, “America seems to be a fairy tale where the people live peacefully and in abundance” Correspondent’s Service Bulletin, 1:5-8, May-August 1946, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

Children shaped narratives to highlight the impact of the program and to celebrate the American sponsors. Rescue Children, in particular, publicized their successful efforts by advertising in the mainstream press, such as the *New York Post* and *Women's Wear Daily*.⁷⁸

Rescue Children also sought celebrity endorsements, which extended the reach of their efforts. In 1946, the organization sponsored an adoption by Mayor William O'Dwyer of New York, pairing him with eight-year-old Gaston Maurice Friedman of Poland, who lived at a Rescue Children home in Belgium. The *Herald-Tribune* ran a large picture of Mayor O'Dwyer receiving his adoption certificate from a committee of Polish rabbis. The image is striking: Mayor O'Dwyer in a suit surrounded by three orthodox rabbis with beards and hats solemnly exchanging the certificate. The caption explained, "The committee of rabbis will pay for the care of the boy for one year in the mayor's name."⁷⁹ Through this adoption, Rescue Children and the committee of rabbis gained valuable support and an endorsement from Mayor O'Dwyer.

The publicity investment continued to pay off. In April 1947, Rescue Children distributed a press release with a photo of Gaston wearing a beret and holding a pen set sent to him by Mayor O'Dwyer.⁸⁰ At the 1947 fundraising dinner for Rescue Children, Mayor O'Dwyer added his own gift by presenting a bicycle that Herbert Tenzer took overseas and hand delivered to

⁷⁸ Multiple advertisements featured images of young survivors and brief details about their lives. An advertisement in *Women's Wear Daily* from September 24, 1946 stated, "Now Daniel is No Longer Afraid...he can smile again for we "adopted" him." Each advertisement declared that a young child had been saved from fear, oblivion, and the "chaos of War's aftermath" through Rescue Children and the support of "adoptive" parents. Ad space in *Women's Wear Daily* was donated by the Maternity Dress Company as part of their commitment to Rescue Children. *Women's Wear Daily*, September 24, 1946 and "Who Cares" advertisement, *Women's Wear Daily*, Box 16, Folder 9, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁷⁹ Clippings from *Herald-Tribune*, Box 2, Folder 296, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Gaston.⁸¹ The Master of Ceremonies for the dinner later said, “This is the first time we have ever seen a bike with a throbbing heart and I think it is really a symbol. It is not just a bike. And I am sure it won’t be just the Mayor’s kid that will ride that bike, but lots of kids are going to get a chance to develop their limbs on that bicycle.”⁸² Photos of Gaston on the bike circulated around the New York press following Tenzer’s trip to Europe and appeared in the *New York Times* on July 4, 1947.⁸³ The continued press coverage of the Mayor and Gaston celebrated the efforts of American donors and spread the word about Rescue Children without detailing any experiences of Jewish children under Nazism. This kind of publicity succeeded in perpetuating public interest in the problem of war orphans without communicating anything about the Holocaust.

Towards the same end, Rescue Children placed pictures of Eddie Cantor and Bing Crosby with their adoption certificates in newspapers around the country. Articles were printed in the St. Louis, Missouri *Post Dispatch*, the Cincinnati, Ohio *Times Star*, and the *Contra Costa Gazette* of Martinez, California about Bing Crosby’s Belgian Orphan, Zulma Scheinowitz.⁸⁴ In September 1947, International News Service circulated an image of Eddie Cantor and his wife, Ida, gazing at an image of their adopted son, Leon Zucker. In the image, Eddie played to part and hammed it up, making a funny face that belies the seriousness of Leon’s circumstances. The image was accompanied by the caption, “In their Los Angeles home, the radio comedian and his wife examine [a] photo of Leon Zucker, a five year old Jewish war orphan, whom they are

⁸¹ 1947 Dinner Transcript, Box 3, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Clipping of *New York Times*, July 4, 1947, Box 14, Folder 9, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁸⁴ “Bing Adopts Belgian Orphan,” St. Louis, MO *Post Dispatch*, September 18, 1947. “Crosby’s ‘daughter’,” Cincinnati, OH *Times Star*, September 17, 1947. “Bing’s baby ‘Adoption’,” *Contra Costa Gazette* of Martinez, CA, August 13, 1947. Scrapbook of publicity articles, Box 16, File 9, RCP/Yeshiva.

adopting and supporting through an organization known as Rescue Children.” According to a Rescue Children scrapbook, this image and caption ran across the country, including Silver City, New Mexico, Cohoes, New York, Wilmington, California, and Norwich, New York.⁸⁵

A longer article and slightly more subdued image of Eddie and Ida ran in Jewish newspapers from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and Omaha, Nebraska to Paterson, New Jersey and elaborated on Rescue Children’s effort to care for “1800 wards” in “15 child care centers” across Europe. The article also detailed Leon’s survival, explaining, “His parents had fled to Russia when the Nazis invaded Poland and died during an influenza epidemic soon after Leon’s birth.”⁸⁶ The article noted that this made Leon a “full” orphan. The longer format and different image intended to reach a Jewish audience, indicating a different public narrative for American Jews and a broader American audience. The change in image is particularly suggestive, hinting at a subtle, but noticeable difference in how Jewish audiences and non-Jewish audiences understood the nature of Jewish persecution during the war and the crisis in the postwar period. Nonetheless, even this more detailed and thoughtful framing of Rescue Children’s efforts celebrated the success of this project, asserting a hopeful tone as Leon “changed...from a nervous distraught child to a happy, well-adjusted one.”⁸⁷

Rescue Children’s most audacious publicity stunt similarly appealed to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. In October 1947, Rescue Children brought two young survivors from France to New York for a ten-day publicity blitz. The trip was covered by *Life Magazine* and the November 17, 1947 edition featured three-pages of images of young Irene Guttman and Charles

⁸⁵ Scrapbook of publicity articles, Box 16, File 9, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁸⁶ “Eddie and Ida ‘adopt’ Son,” Omaha Nebraska Jewish Press, October 3, 1947. Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

Karo under the title, “Orphans Clothed.”⁸⁸ Irene and Charles were photographed around New York City in a variety of posed scenarios: trying on new clothes, carrying stuffed animals while gazing up at skyscrapers (Figure 7), and grabbing, wide eyed, at magnificent pile of sandwiches (Figure 8).⁸⁹



Figure 7, Figure 8: Images of Irene Guttman and Charles Karo in and around New York City celebrated the efforts of American Jewish sponsors who raised money to support Jewish orphans. These images depicted the amazement and abundance of America in contrast to the destruction of war and scarcity in postwar Europe.

“Orphans Clothed,” *Life Magazine*, November 17, 1947, 57, 58.

On October 20, 1947, Irene and Charles were the guests of honor at the annual Gala Luncheon and Fashion Show of Busy Buddies, a New Jersey based women’s group that sponsored the Flublaines Children’s home under Rescue Children Care, and represented the 100 orphans that Busy Buddies sponsored in France.⁹⁰ Three days later, Irene and Charles visited the

⁸⁸ “Orphans Clothed,” *Life Magazine*, November 17, 1947, 57-60.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 57, 58.

⁹⁰ Irene and Charles were meant to bring “with them the heartfelt thanks and best wishes of the children who had to remain behind.” Annual Luncheon Brochure, Box 15, Folder 4, RCP/Yeshiva.

White House and met the President. These events were covered by the national and local press.⁹¹ Like the celebrity endorsements, this kind of publicity sparked attention for Rescue Children and Busy Buddies, but little to the experience of either Charles or Irene during or after the war. The images in *Life* were posed to focus on the joys of American life and to celebrate those who sponsored the trip for these two young children. The accompanying article included no detail about their wartime experiences, noting only, “Both of Irene’s parents were exterminated in a concentration camp. Charles’ father was killed and his mother died of starvation.”⁹²

Rather than tell a story about the Holocaust, the *Life* magazine told an American story about abundance and consumerism.⁹³ Irene and Charles were poster children that signified the desperation of postwar Europe more than embodied survivors who could speak to their own experiences. Nonetheless, the publicity worked for Rescue Children and Busy Buddies as *Life* reported, “The sight of Irene and Charles at daily luncheons and parties has already touched so many hearts that donations to Busy Buddies, Inc. have jumped 30%.”⁹⁴ That the presence of Irene and Charles in America could spark participation in the adoption program speaks to the importance of children as symbols of the Holocaust and the resonance of America as part of a Holocaust story.

⁹¹ “They can’t talk for looking,” *New York Post*, October 21, 1947. “War Orphans from Czechoslovakia and Poland,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1947; “Sprucing up for their visit to President Truman,” *New York Times*, October 22, 1947; and Letter from William Novick to Mrs. Magda Bierman, November 4, 1948, Box 15, Folder 4, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁹² “Orphans Clothed,” *Life Magazine*, November 17, 1947, 57.

⁹³ All accompanying articles noted that B. Altman and Company had donated the new clothes Irene and Charles wore.

⁹⁴ The short article in *Life* didn’t mention Rescue Children at all, focusing on Busy Buddies as the sponsoring organization. In fact, Busy Buddies organized the trip, but Rescue Children took on responsibility for both Irene and Charles during and after the 10-day tour. “Orphans Clothed,” 57.

The article, the luncheon, and other publicity surrounding Irene and Charles were joyous and celebratory, drawing optimism and hope from the despair of these children's lives. For the ten-day trip, this American spirit prevailed. But, Rescue Children's involvement with Irene and Charles did not end after the publicity tour. The two young children were intended to return to the children's home in France after their visit and tell the other survivors "about the Busy Buddies and the United States of America."⁹⁵ However, both Irene and Charles remained in the United States when Rescue Children leadership decided they could not send them back to the depravation in Europe after showing them the comforts of America.⁹⁶ Charles lived for some time with the Gut family on Long Island before being placed with Helen and Ernst Friedman in 1950.⁹⁷ By September 1951, Charles enjoyed a full life with the Friedmans, preparing for his Bar Mitzvah, making the JV basketball team, and opening up a checking account.⁹⁸ On March 4, 1952, the Friedman's legally adopted Charles and he took their name. The Friedmans were eager to bring Charles' sister, Helene, to American and by 1952, Helene was living with them, although her adoption was not legalized until 1956.⁹⁹ Efforts by Herbert Tenzer and William Novick of Rescue Children also resulted in Irene Guttman's adoption by the Slotkyn family of Lawrence, NY. Like the Friedmans, the Slotkyns committed to reuniting Irene with her twin

⁹⁵ Annual Luncheon Brochure, Box 15, Folder 4, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁹⁶ Interview with William Z. Novick in *Rene and I*, film, Directed by Gina M. Angelone Produced by Gina M. Angelone, Leora Kahn, and Zeva Oelbaum, 2005.

⁹⁷ Charles Karo Bio, Box 14, Folder 7, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁹⁸ Charles sent Bar Mitzvah invitations to Rescue Children board members, including Tenzer, William Novick, Magda Bierman, Busy Buddies Director, and Kate Diamant, the woman who accompanied him on his initial flight to the US. Letters from Charles Karo (undated), Letter from Herbert Tenzer to Magda Bierman, November 24, 1951, Letter from Herbert Tenzer to Charles Friedman, November 6, 1951, about the bank account, Letter from Herbert Tenzer to Lawrence-Cederhurst Bank, September 18, 1951: "Charles is desirous of transferring his bank account to Lancaster, PA." Letter from Tenzer to Bierman, November 24, 1951, Box 14, Folder 7, RCP/Yeshiva.

⁹⁹ Box 14, Folder 13, RCP/Yeshiva.

brother, Rene, and pursued his immigration for over two years. In 1950, Irene was finally reunited with Rene and he was also adopted by the Slotkyn family.

Irene and Charles represented, in one sense, great successes of Rescue Children and all adoption-like programs. They were both legally adopted in the US and reunited with family members through Rescue Children's efforts. Yet, their stories also illustrated how representations of Holocaust survivors were manufactured through these kinds of programs. As poster children for Rescue Children, they toured around the U.S. not as part of a healing process, but to appeal to American donors and spread awareness of Rescue Children's program. The extant public narratives, from *Life Magazine* and multiple newspapers, suggest that Americans were moved to help orphans like Irene and Charles, but, again, they were motivated not by the details of war time experiences, but by the aid and joy Americans could bring to the survivors of Europe. Similarly, American Jews acted according to American values.

A reflection of American anxieties

In addition to reflecting broader American values of consumerism, generosity, and optimism, the pen-pal projects also responded to the anxieties of American Jewry about a Jewish future. This was a particularly deep anxiety among American Jews in the wake of the war as European Jewry was decimated. The survival of Jewish children became of primary importance as the bearers of a Jewish culture. As such, American Jews feverishly worried about a generation of Jewish children who had been saved in non-Jewish environments during the war. Stories of baptisms circulated and anxiety rose that these children would be lost forever to Judaism. As a result, efforts to retrieve such children from non-Jewish environments were of utmost urgency

and the stories that were promoted by Rescue Children and the Child Care Division featured young Jewish survivors who had lost and returned to Judaism.

The Child Care Division dedicated an entire newsletter to letters and poems from the Children's Home in Zabrze, Poland, which cared exclusively for children who had been hidden in convents or non-Jewish homes. One of the essays, written by Pol Tem., was titled "How I remained a Jew."¹⁰⁰ Pol wrote about his experience learning that he was not a Pole, but a Jew and the long and troubling process of accepting his own Jewishness. From the point of view of the Children's home, he could not be both Polish and Jewish and they worked to bring him back to an exclusive Jewish identity. During the war, Pol had lived "peacefully" with Mrs. Helen Kor, a devout Catholic. At that time, he was called "Pawel Kor" and called Mrs. Kor "mother." Only on August 29, 1947, did Pol find out that Mrs. Kor was not his mother, but a woman paid a great deal of money to look after him by his father, who did not survive the war. At that time, a relative reclaimed Pol and took him to the children's home in Zabrze. Upon learning that he had been born a Jew, Pol "started to cry and decided that despite everything [he] would remain a Pole for the rest of [his] life." For the first few weeks at the children's home, Pol did not eat or sleep with the other children, because they were Jewish. After about three months, Pol got used to living among Jews and the director of the home, Captain Drucker, convinced him to use his Jewish name instead of his Polish one. Pol wrote,

I agreed to this, only on one condition, that I would call myself Pawel Tem.-Kor. And that I would be a Jew of Catholic religion. That was quite an achievement for Captain Drucker, but it was not enough. Together with my teacher, Mr. M., they tried to convince me time and again, and again, and I finally agreed to become a complete Jew. There was so much happiness among the teachers

¹⁰⁰ Pol Tem, "How I remained a Jew," D75, File 6, WJC/AJA, and Correspondent's Service Bulletin, 1:5-8, May-August 1946, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

because one more Jewish child came back to Judaism. I am now a one hundred percent Jew...¹⁰¹

Pol's story was a success for the Child Care Division's work bringing young Jews back into the Jewish community and was published in the October 1948 Bulletin. Pol's account also reflects the complexity of the post-liberation period for survivors, especially for children who were trying to understand who they were and where they fit in the world.

As an affiliate of Vaad Hatzala, rescuing Jewish children from Christianity was the central mission of Rescue Children. Many of the life histories of their children highlighted how they had lost their Judaism during the war and that Rescue Children succeeded in bringing them back into Jewish life. For example, Alfred Frydmann's file read: "The parents have been deported. The boy has been placed for two years in a catholic orphanage, where he has been baptized. After liberation, we have withdrawn the child and placed him in our home."¹⁰² The frequency of this kind of brief narrative in the case files reflects Rescue Children's intention to save such young children and instances where the children were baptized received particular attention. Some of these children had been found by surviving parents who could not afford to take care of them after the war, but many more were rescued, often through bribery, by Vaad Hatzala.¹⁰³

Yet, Rescue Children was not only concerned with saving Jewish children from losing Judaism, the organization also believed it had to rescue Judaism itself. A Vaad Hatzala brochure

¹⁰¹ Tem, "How I Remained a Jew."

¹⁰² Life History, Alfred Frydmann, Box 2, Folder 295, RCP/Yeshiva.

¹⁰³ See Files 275 – 324 in Box 2, RCP/Yeshiva. Most of the children living in Rescue Children homes had been taken from non-Jewish hiding places.

entitled, “Shall Judaism Survive?” lists the Jewish elements only instituted through Vaad Hatzala care, including the establishment of 15 Yeshivot, maintaining kosher kitchens, and organizing Talmud Torahs and religious schools.¹⁰⁴ Rescue Children was an essential component of this effort as it raised funds to care for young orphans rescued from non-Jewish homes. It is not surprising, then, that many of the children featured in their materials needed to be reintroduced to Judaism and that Rescue Children defined both the children and the religion as in need of saving and “reclaiming.”¹⁰⁵

The “adoption” programs sponsored by Rescue Children and the World Jewish Congress fulfilled the interests of American Jews to connect directly with Jewish survivors. It should not be surprising, then, that these programs also crafted public narratives about survivors that reflected American Jewish concerns about the Jewish future. The brochures and member newsletters that featured stories about bringing Jewish children back into a Jewish life celebrated the ability of American Jewish friendship and humanitarianism to defy the Nazi attempt to destroy Judaism and reclaim a generation of lost Jews.

“My letters are very cheerful”

As such, the interests of American Jews and their anxieties about the postwar world shaped early Holocaust stories. The network created by these programs connected the organizations and their leaders to the donors and the survivors through mutual interest and

¹⁰⁴ “Shall Judaism Survive?” Box 7, Folder 61, Vaad Hatzala Papers/Yeshiva.

¹⁰⁵ Advertisements, “Who Cares” and “Daniel” both declare that the children need to be “reclaimed.” Reprints, Box 16, Folder 9, RCP/Yeshiva.

dependency. But, the network only functioned if donors remained engaged and both survivors and organizations sought to motivate American Jews through Holocaust survivor narratives. What did American pen-pals gain from the experience? And, how did the relationships crafted across the ocean through these organizational intermediaries transmit stories about the Holocaust to America?

Barbara S., a young American girl from New Hope, PA, wrote to the Child Care Division on January 6, 1948 explaining a summer trip to Europe, during which her family met her younger sister's pen-pal, Madeleine B. of Paris. She wrote, "While in Paris we got in touch with her family, and Madeleine, her brother and aunt came up to our hotel. They were all most charming...Even though no English was spoken, we got on very well. The aunt spoke French and Yiddish, the children spoke French and understood Yiddish, my parents know a little Yiddish and my sister and I got by her fair and my bad French."¹⁰⁶ Barbara enclosed pictures of the two young French children during their visit and then thanked the Child Care Division for the name of a new pen-pal from Czechoslovakia, even though she "was hoping for the name of a girl in France whom I could practice my French on and whom I could visit and get to know like we did with the B's when we go to Europe."¹⁰⁷ Barbara's letter revealed some of the motivations of young American writers, such as practicing language skills and making friends around the world. Her letter also depicted the language barriers that hampered some relationships and how the pen-pal programs, designed for children, connected entire families to survivors of the Holocaust.

An earlier letter from Barbara to the Child Care Division office additionally confirmed that young survivors transmitted their Holocaust experiences through these letters. In the

¹⁰⁶ "Correspondent's Service Bulletin," 3:1-4, January-April 1948, Box D74, File 10, WJC Records, AJA.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

January-March 1947 “Correspondent’s Service Bulletin,” an excerpt from Barbara’s letter explained what she had learned from her pen-pal, George. She wrote, “His parents were taken away in 1944 to Germany. He was left alone. He said that he suddenly turned from a 14-year-old child into a grown up man. He said that he sometimes had to defend himself with a gun from German and Hungarian Nazis. He said that he would write me about his many adventures.”¹⁰⁸ Through her relationship with George, Barbara learned an eyewitness story well enough to retell it. Yet, her use of the term “adventures” signals an interesting mismatch with the terror associated with Holocaust stories. Rather than represent George as a victim of Nazism, she calls him an adventurer with stories to tell.¹⁰⁹

Other letters in the collection and newsletters of the Child Care Division of the World Jewish Congress further affirmed the success of the correspondence programs in establishing relationships between American Jews and the surviving Jews of Europe. Eugenio L. of Los Angeles wrote to the office to thank the Child Care Division for their work in the name of European children, and that he continued (as of October 1948) to maintain correspondence with five “former foster children,” two of whom were already living in Israel.¹¹⁰ The group “Club Cher Ami,” formed by a number of 14-year old girls in Chicago, IL wrote, “I want to sincerely thank you for all you’ve done for us and for your help to European children. I think you have succeeded in bringing a closer understanding of the American children and the European

¹⁰⁸ In the later published letter, Barbara states that she continued to correspond with George, hearing from him almost weekly in January 1948. “Correspondent’s Service Bulletin,” 2:1-3, January-March 1947, Box D74, File 10, WJC/AJA.

¹⁰⁹ Barbara’s use of the term “adventures” calls to mind the language of Rabbi Friedman about his “excitement” in postwar Europe detailed in chapter one. The use of this kind of language and the frame of adventure reveals the American perspective of the writers.

¹¹⁰ Excerpts of some letters received by the Child Care Division after the announcement of its liquidation, November 11, 1948, Box D75, File 5, WJC/AJA.

children.”¹¹¹ These letters confirmed the power of letter writing to build friendships, highlighting the success of Varchaver’s intentions for “rehabilitation through personal contact.”

The interest of American donors was also reflected in the cheerful tone of most letters and accounts. Part of the hopeful tone comes from the fact that children wrote the letters. But, a 1946 survey conducted by the Child Care Division suggested that American donors only wanted to read optimistic stories. The Child Care Division collected questionnaires from members of the Correspondent’s Plan that reflected diverse experiences for the correspondents, including both those who enthusiastically formed friendships with their pen-pals and those who failed to write at all. Such failures point to the limitations of a volunteer based program. However, some respondents wrote about how glad they were to have had the opportunity to communicate with a child in Europe and many respondents indicated that the children had written about their wartime experiences or the loss of their parents, but they did not share any additional remarks.

Some of the questionnaires, however, revealed that even if the children did write about what they lived through during the war, the correspondents did not ask further questions. Hilda Herschaft of Newark, NJ responded to the survey on September 6, 1946 and wrote that she had been in correspondence with Minnie Chochema, but that the letters had nothing of interest for the WJC. Hireschaft wrote, “I asked her nothing of what happened to her during the war for I feel that if she had any hard times she would rather forget them. My letters are very cheerful and full of news about things that are going on over here.”¹¹² Hireschaft’s response demonstrated the problem with communicating about the Holocaust in the immediate aftermath of the war and through this kind of program; what kinds of questions could Mrs. Hireschaft ask a child and what

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Questionnaire from Hilda Herschaft, Box D80, File 15, WJC/AJA.

would be appropriate to ask of a stranger? Yet, her interest in being a pen-pal and her correspondence suggests that she has some knowledge about what Minnie had lived through and she knew that it had been “hard times.”¹¹³ The specifics of Minnie’s experience were not important to her, but the lack of detail did not dampen her generous spirit in writing “cheerful” letters and sending packages.

Doris N. Lesik of Snyder, NY, who wrote on behalf of the Joycrafter group, noted that the first letter they received from Fiorina Di Veroli was “heartbreaking, and yet in spite of the horrors she and her family have endured, there is no discernable bitterness in the letter.”¹¹⁴ The response indicated that the Joycrafter group was delighted with Fiorina as a pen-pal. Their reaction to Fiorina’s eyewitness account was sadness, but they were impressed by her ability to not be bitter. This response, although tonally different from Hireschaft’s, similarly valued the positive over the tragic. These sentiments corresponded to an American sense of optimism. Even the generous individuals who gave their time and money to support the Jews of Europe preferred “cheerful” stories to those of “bitterness.” Hope and positivity in the face of tragedy were valued as part of the Child Care Division work and the survey responses suggested that this ideal mirrored the mindset of the volunteers.

¹¹³ Beth Cohen’s assessment of Jewish social workers in postwar America is relevant here. Cohen argues that the social workers were more concerned with assimilating survivors than with listening to the needs, concerns, and traumas of the survivors they worked with. She contends that survivors felt silenced through the efforts of these social workers. In some ways, the pen-pals that did not want to confront the “hard times” were acting in a similar way, hoping to look past the more difficult realities. But, the spirit of their letter writing was not to silence. Certainly there is a tension that adds complexity to our understanding of postwar silence and silencing in a way that considers the active participation of American Jews in postwar rehabilitation and yet considers where there were gaps in understanding and communication. Beth B Cohen and United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Case Closed: Holocaust Survivors in Postwar America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2007).

¹¹⁴ Questionnaire from Doris Lesik, Box D80, File 15, WJC/AJA.

Conclusion

Despite the success of these projects to aid individual survivors and establish relationships between Americans and surviving Jews of Europe, by 1948 both programs were closed. The Child Care Division gave up the Foster Parent's project in 1947 as part of a fundraising deal with UJA and the Correspondent's Plan ended the following year.¹¹⁵ The World Jewish Congress and Vaad Hatzala could no longer maintain support for children's homes scattered across Europe and the JDC took over their respective homes. Rescue Children engaged in a year-long negotiation with the JDC to ensure that their homes continued to maintain Orthodox standards. Following the turn over, Rescue Children became largely defunct, although they continued to collect outstanding pledges and aided a few additional survivors to get to Israel.¹¹⁶ After 1948, only the Jewish Labor Committee continued raising more money for direct adoption programs.¹¹⁷ The impulse for adoption that had been so strong at the immediate end of the war fizzled in just a few years and as the JDC took control of the DP aid effort in Europe projects directed at individual survivors ended.

As the World Jewish Congress reconceived its projects away from direct aid, the remnants of the Correspondent's Program were dismembered. Varchaver tried to keep the correspondence program alive, but ultimately did not succeed. The Chanukah Program was taken over exclusively by the Women's Division of the American Jewish Congress and began sending

¹¹⁵ Child Care Division Report, January 1948, Box D74, Folder 7, WJC/AJA.

¹¹⁶ Letter from Herbert Tenzer to Magda Bierman, November 4, 1948, Box 15, Folder 4, RCP/Yeshiva.

¹¹⁷ JLC "foster" parents continued to support their "adopted" children well into the 50s and in some cases until 1960. Three key differences in their project made longevity possible. First, they were not affiliated in anyway with the UJA, so there was no fundraising competition. Second, most of the sponsoring groups were unions or other collective groups. Each individual member was not responsible for either a large financial commitment or correspondence. Finally, the bulk of responsibility fell to the JLC administrative office that collected money from sponsors, sent packages to the children, and managed dispersal of monthly stipend money across Europe.

toys to children in Israel in the 1948 Campaign.¹¹⁸ By 1950, almost all efforts to aid orphans in Europe similarly shifted to aiding children in Israel. In this way, the aid followed the children, the majority of whom had been sent from the DP camps and children's homes of Europe to Israel through efforts by Hadassah, JDC, and other groups working in postwar Europe.

Yet, Catherine Varchaver remained committed to the idea of "Rehabilitation through Personal Contact" and she founded a new organization in June 1949 to continue the work: the Friendship Service for Jewish Children, Inc.¹¹⁹ The initial letter introducing the new organization to previous correspondents and new prospects expressed continuity with the aims of the Child Care Division. She wrote, "It is not enough to make impersonal financial contributions to various agencies. We must speak to people directly....the warmth extended in your letters by personal words of friendship and encouragement will not only inspire the will to survive among individuals, but will raise in them hope for a better world as a whole."¹²⁰ Able to focus exclusively on a letter-writing campaign, Varchaver articulated that direct communication with survivors offered warmth, friendship, and hope – things money could never do. The ideals of her efforts did find success in some volunteers who continued to maintain relationships with their "adopted" children and even sponsored them to come to the United States.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ Letter from Justine Wise Polier, Box 36, Folder "Chanukah Project," American Jewish Congress Papers, AJHS.

¹¹⁹ In the first Quarterly Bulletin of the new Friendship service, Varchaver included the note: "We are glad to find the expression of the very essence of the aim of our Agency; the same aim which animated the former Child Care Division, World Jewish Congress, which originated the 'Correspondence Service for European Jewish Children' immediately after the end of the war." "Quarterly Bulletin: Friendship Service for Jewish Children, Inc" Vol. 1, No. 1, January 1950, 2, Box D75, File 7, WJC/AJA.

¹²⁰ "Friendship for Jewish Children, Inc," November 1, 1949, Box D75, File 7, WJC/AJA.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Varchaver's belief in the power of correspondence to bring hope to thousands of young survivors in Europe transformed the interest of American Jews to connect with survivors into productive projects. The Correspondents' Service, Rescue Children, and other adoption-like programs responded to the intense interest in direct communication with survivors that followed the war and converted the general concern with family and children into programs that connected child survivors in Europe with sponsors and foster parents in the United States. These programs also succeeded in bringing the stories of the Holocaust to America. These eyewitness accounts became the nexus of the philanthropic network that linked donors, organizations, and survivors throughout the US, Europe, and the world and defined philanthropic relationships built on communication, empathy, and mutual exchange.

The narratives generated from these programs, both those from survivors and those created for publicity, offer a glimpse into how American Jews were first introduced to eyewitness accounts of survivors. It is clear that the public narratives that reached wider audiences through advertisements, articles, photographs, bulletins, pamphlets, and published papers tended to minimize the survivor's individual experiences. Rather, the basic elements of a Jewish experience under Nazism, including deportation, loss, and displacement, were conveyed in general terms. The narratives also reveal that stories about the Holocaust crafted for American audiences reflected American values and the anxieties of American Jewry, including the restorative power of the nuclear family, the hope and innocence of children within that structure, and the future of Jewish life around the globe. As such, even these early accounts of the Holocaust, stories told in relation to the exchange of material and emotional aid, were defined by American interests and constructed for their American audience. Yet, the pen-pal correspondence suggests that some survivors found agency in telling their stories and

establishing relationships with donors, while others, like those sponsored through Rescue Children, remained powerless to define their own stories and experiences.

5.

Broadcasting a Survivor Voice: Radio as Advocacy Tool

When David Boder travelled to Europe in July 1946, he carried with him an Armour wire recorder and 200 spools of wire to record the “impressions still alive in the victims liberated from concentration camps and from slave labor... not only in their own languages but in their own voice.”¹ Over a period of two months, Boder collected more than 100 interviews with Jewish and non-Jewish victims of Nazi atrocities in nine languages and brought over 120 hours of orally recorded material back to America.² Boder’s recordings are considered to be the earliest oral recordings of Holocaust survivor testimony and, in an attempt to preserve the conversational and oral qualities of his interviews, he translated the interviews by orally recording his translation on a separate wire spool and then transcribing the English version.³

Yet, Boder was never able to make the audio recordings available for audiences and had to publish the interviews in print. In 1949, Boder published nine transcribed interviews in *I did*

¹ Multiple copies of memoranda sent from Boder to various funding agencies reiterate this goal. Memorandum of project proposal, July 9, 1945, Box 1, Folder “Additional Notes,” David P. Boder Papers (DPB), UCLA Special Collections. The wire recorder had only recently been invented by Marvin Camras, a colleague of Boder’s at the Illinois Institute of Technology. Camrus went on to become a pioneer in the field of magnetic recording, developing not only the wire-based system, but multi-track tape recording, stereophonic sound reproduction, and magnetic sound for motion pictures. He held over 500 patents. For more about Camrus’ contribution to the history of sound recording in America see David Morton, *Off the Record: The Technology and Culture of Sound Recording in America*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2000) 61-66.

² For more about Boder’s life and work see Alan Rosen, *The Wonder of Their Voices: The 1946 Holocaust Interviews of David Boder*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010). Boder’s project is also described in more detail in chapter one.

³ Rosen, *The Wonder of their Voices*, viii. This translation system was intended to maintain the patterns of natural speech, but was not always the successful. See Jürgen Matthäus, *Approaching an Auschwitz Survivor: Holocaust Testimony and Its Transformations*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

Not Interview the Dead and he self-published 70 interview transcripts between 1950 – 1957 as *Topical Autobiographies of Displaced People Recorded Verbatim in Displaced Persons Camps, with a Psychological and Anthropological Analysis*.⁴ In this way, Boder's oral interviews were transformed into print materials and the value of preserving survivor voices in his or her own language was obscured until the Illinois Institute of Technology found a misplaced box of Boder's materials in 1990 and began digitizing the original interview recordings. The *Voices of the Holocaust* project launched its website in 2000, providing access to the English translations of 70 interviews and by 2009 made all original language interviews available to listeners for the first time.⁵ The website finally allowed Boder's work to be heard as he had initially intended.⁶

Chapter one of this study considers Boder as a counter example to secondary witnesses who translated the stories of survivors into their own encounters with postwar Europe. Here, Boder's project offers an introduction to the possibilities for audio technologies to collect, preserve, and transmit voiced expressions of survivors in the immediate aftermath of the war. Boder's interviews failed to find an audience as audio recordings, but American Jewish organizations and other groups that worked closely with DPs took advantage of available technologies to record survivor voices and produce radio shows that broadcasted those voices to American audiences.⁷ Groups such as the United Service for New Americans (USNA), the

⁴ David P. Boder, *I Did Not Interview the Dead*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949) and Boder, *Topical Autobiographies of Displaced People: Recorded Verbatim in Displaced Persons Camps with a Psychological and Anthropological Analysis*, (Los Angeles and Chicago, 1950).

⁵ For more about the history of the *Voices of the Holocaust* project see http://voices.iit.edu/voices_project and Carl Marziali, "Uncovering Lost Voices: 1946 David Boder Tapes Revived," *American Libraries* 34, no. 2 (2003): 45-46.

⁶ *Voices of the Holocaust* is available at <http://voices.iit.edu/>.

⁷ For more about sound and sound technologies in the postwar period, see the collected essays in David Suisman, David, and Susan Strasser, *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

Citizen's Committee for Displaced Persons (CCDP), UJA, National Council for Jewish Women (NCJW) and Hadassah used radio to appeal to diverse American audiences to advocate for immigration reform, inspire financial giving, and spread awareness about the DP crisis in Europe.

This chapter examines survivor stories on broadcast radio to consider how personal narratives of life under Nazism were orally transmitted to American audiences. In addition to the recorded and edited voices of survivors, many broadcast radio presentations about the Holocaust at the time were dramatized into radio plays and employed actors to perform as survivors. In this way, early survivor voices that could reach a wide audience fractured the association between an individual, their voice, and their experience and rendered survivor voices in American accents and through American motifs, a process that disembodied survivor voices. Nonetheless, organizations relied on the contemporary tools of radio broadcasting to harness the power of individual stories for political and philanthropic action.

The chapter will first explore where stories about Holocaust survivors fit into the airwaves of postwar American broadcast radio and the use of American themes to advocate for immigration reform as a postwar priority. I will then examine two radio broadcasts in detail: *Displaced*, a radio drama that depicted the story of Kurt Maier and was produced by the Citizen's Committee for Displaced Persons, a non-sectarian organization dedicated to temporary immigration reform, and *Case History #20,000*, a radio script produced by Hadassah, which presented the story of the 20,000th child to immigrate to Palestine with Youth Aliyah. These programs exemplify the transformation of survivor narratives from print to radio at the time and reveal how American motifs of Thanksgiving and freedom were used to craft survivor accounts

for American audiences. *Displaced* and *Case History #20,000* also offer opportunities to examine the role of the interviewer in the process of making Holocaust memory.

Boder's interviews point to the linguistic and technological challenges of recording audio in the postwar world and transmitting an "authentic" survivor voice to an American audience.⁸ Broadcast radio programs, however, presented Americans not only with survivor stories but also with the process of giving testimony and generating memory. While Boder's interviews took decades to find a listening audience, broadcast radio transmitted survivor voices and made them part of the public discourse about immigration reform in postwar America. How did the representations of survivors become voiced through this medium?

Survivor voices on postwar radio

In the late 1940s and early 1950s, radio drew in a wide audience that crossed economic, social, and ethnic boundaries. Families listened to radio dramas together and World War II had

⁸ The idea of "authentic" testimony calls attention to the gap between popular Holocaust culture (including Holocaust education) and scholarly engagement with and documentation of survivor memory. Facing History and Ourselves, a non-profit organization dedicated to Holocaust education, introduces lesson plans for exploring survivor testimony in the classroom by saying that testimony has provided an opportunity "to hear an authentic eyewitness." Similarly, Echoes & Reflections, a Holocaust education program, sponsored by the ADL, USC Shoah Foundation, and Yad Vashem, promotes their curricular materials, including testimony, photography, diary entries, and other primary sources, as a way to help students "build an authentic and complete portrait of the past." At the same time, scholars of Holocaust literature look critically at this assumption of authenticity. James Young unpacks the "sacredness" of testimony by recognizing its authority as a source of self-expression separately from its truthfulness. Young writes, "By imputing to an ontologically *authentic* text an indisputably authoritative factuality, the reader confuses the kind of privilege a survivor's testimony necessarily demands. For even though a survivor's testimony is 'privileged' insofar as it is authentic, the factuality of his literary testimony is *not* necessarily so privileged." In the postwar period, the relationship between fact and authority was less confrontational and the stories played on broadcast radio were understood to be truthful. History and Ourselves Website: <https://www.facinghistory.org/for-educators/educator-resources/resource-collections/survivor-testimony>, accessed March 27, 2014. Echoes & Reflections Website: <http://www.echoesandreflections.org/>, accessed March 27, 2014. James E. Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust: Narrative and the Consequences of Interpretation*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988) 22.

made radio a reliable source of up-to-date news.⁹ As Robert Moss declared, “Radio, unlike films or newspapers or even a good book, could both inform and entertain with no more effort on your part than simply listening, all in the comfort of your easy chair.”¹⁰ As both a news and entertainment medium, radio featured stories about Nazi crimes and the victims of Nazi persecution. Many of these pieces discussed Nazi atrocities in broad terms and the diversity of DPs in Europe – including Catholics, Protestants, and Jews. Other pieces recognized the specifically Jewish element of Nazi policies and focused on the Jewish victims.

There was already well-established Jewish space on the radio in English.¹¹ The weekly NBC radio drama, *The Eternal Light*, sponsored by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, drew in millions of listeners each week.¹² The program featured dramatic readings, biographies of Jewish historical figures, and aired multiple episodes about the events of Nazi Europe, survivors of Nazi atrocity, and the postwar crisis that faced the surviving Jews of

⁹ In his 1950 study of the radio industry, Gilbert Seldes states, “broadcasting is a medium of fact. Our myths are fabricated in Hollywood; radio is the modern oracle.” Seldes furthers his argument that radio had merit as a fact-based media form by challenging critiques who misunderstood how radio traversed the boundaries between entertainment and information: “The fault of critics was that they had not analyzed the nature of radio and took it for a form of entertainment, like the movies. It does entertain, but its essence lies elsewhere. The broadcasters themselves rationalized their equivocal public-private character and came closer to the mark.” Gilbert Seldes, *The Great Audience*, (New York : Viking Press, 1950) 105, 107.

¹⁰ Robert L. Mott, *Radio Sound Effects: Who Did It, and How, in the Era of Live Broadcasting*, (Jefferson, N.C: McFarland, 1993), 1. Michael Stamm has also argued that radio offered news a new media and audiences a new way to get news. Michael Stamm, “The Sound of Print: newspapers and the public promotion of early radio broadcasting in the United States,” in David Suisman and Susan Strasser. *Sound in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010).

¹¹ For the history of Yiddish radio in America, see Ari Y. Kelman, *Station Identification: A Cultural History of Yiddish Radio in the United States* (Berkeley : University of California Press, 2009).

¹² Morton Wishengrad, *The Eternal Light*, (New York: Crown Publishers, 1947), “Forward” ix. For more about *The Eternal Light* as a Jewish show and Judaism on the radio, see Jeffrey Shandler and Elihu Katz, “Broadcasting American Judaism: The Radio and Television Department of the Jewish Theological Seminary,” *Tradition Renewed: A History of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America*, ed. Jack Wertheimer (New York: JTS Press, 1997) 364 – 401.

Europe.¹³ In the immediate postwar period, their episodes ended with commentary about American Jewish aid work in Europe and asked audience members to support organizations such as the United Jewish Appeal and the American Red Cross.¹⁴

The FCC Communications Act of 1934 mandated that radio stations play regular noncommercial programming as part of their weekly schedule, seeking to establish space for educational programming on American airwaves. A 1946 report of the FCC guidelines, known as the Blue Book, included a reminder to broadcasters about their responsibility to public service and successfully provoked major broadcast stations to air more publicly-minded programming. The reinforcement of regular non-commercial programming made more time available for special interests, like Jewish organizations, to get their programs aired.¹⁵ *The Eternal Light* was conceived of to fill this airtime and other organizations, both religious and civic, produced special one-off shows that could be played as public service programming. Organizations produced two primary types of radio programming: transcriptions, which were pre-recorded records that local stations could use play, and scripts, which were distributed to local chapters and required members to petition stations for time and produce live shows.¹⁶ Although more time was secured for this kind of programming, there was no guarantee that specific pieces would air.

¹³ Markus Krah asserted that 20-21% of the episodes between 1944 and 1950 featured stories about “the Holocaust, the fate of displaced persons, and the Jewish community in Palestine/Israel.” He argued that the regularity and tone of these episodes revealed an emotional concern of American audiences. Markus Krah, “Role Models or Foils for American Jews? *The Eternal Light*, Displaced Persons, and the Construction of Jewishness in Mid-Twentieth-Century America” *American Jewish History* (December 2010) 96:4, 265 – 286. For lists of all the *Eternal Light* broadcasts see Eli Segal, *The Eternal Light: An unauthorized guide*, (Newtown, CT: Yesteryear Press, 2005).

¹⁴ Krah characterized these commentaries as appeals, stating that episodes about displaced persons “urged listeners to provide financial support for the DPs immediate practical needs and political support for their desire to immigrate to Palestine.” Krah, “Role Models or Foils for American Jews?” 267.

¹⁵ Beatrice Tolleris, Radio: How, When and Why to Use it (NY: National Publicity Council, 1946).

¹⁶ Charles A. Siepmann, *The Radio Listener's Bill of Rights: Democracy, Radio and You*, (New York : Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1948) 25-30.

In fact, public service air time had become competitive as stations fought for listeners and major sponsorships that didn't want to follow "boring" airtime.¹⁷ As such, multiple factors determined the construction of radio scripts pertaining to DPs as non-profit groups sought to make their radio pieces entertaining, yet informative and appealing to local stations.

Organizations across the Jewish communal landscape understood the importance of radio as an effective advocacy tool that reached both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. In pursuit of this diverse audience, some Jewish groups sought to make radio programming direct and non-controversial. The 1947 Hadassah "Radio Starter Kit" explained that radio scripts developed for local use were "purposely kept...simple, direct and uninvolved" because "as a rule, stations do not give time for controversial political issues as readily as they do for 'feature' material of the kind we highlight here."¹⁸ Other groups employed different strategies to appeal to a broad audience. In a study of *The Eternal Light's* depiction of the Holocaust, Markus Krah referred to the Jewish and non-Jewish audiences as the "double audience" and argued that the show simultaneously transmitted different messages to each group. Jewish audiences perceived the stories to be about how to be and act Jewish while non-Jews learned about who Jews were and the value Judaism brought to American society.¹⁹ Listener mail suggested that *The Eternal Light* succeeded in reaching both audiences in a meaningful way and the success of the show indicates

¹⁷ Seldes noted that the public service programs in particular were somewhere in between "pure entertainment and radio as transmitter of news and opinions." Seldes, *The Great Audience* 139. A 1944 publicity guide of National Council for Jewish Women advised that all programming should be engaging and entertaining because "The radio audience is the most casual of all to whom we tell our story. It is the one audience that can walk out on us without even an implication of rudeness. It is for the most part more interested in entertainment and amusement than in cold facts and information. If we do not give it what it wants, a flick of the knob may displace Council in favor of a popular crooner. Remember that on the air we are competing with the most experienced talent and showmanship." Radio Manual, 1944, 2, Box 131, Folder Public Relations Manuals 1943-1944, NCJW, LOC.

¹⁸ Radio Starter Kit, 1947, Box 12, Folder: Radio Starter Kits, 1947, OFPA/Hadassah.

¹⁹ Krah, "Role Models or Foils for American Jews?" 269.

that audiences continued to tune in.²⁰ Irregular programming, such as holiday specials or one-off reports did not build audiences in this way, but the popularity of *The Eternal Light* indicated that Judaism found acceptance on the radio and that stories of Holocaust survivors found air time.

Beyond *The Eternal Light*, organizations developed and produced special radio shows to make best use of the radio media and take advantage of the available public interest air time. Radio programs that featured survivors could be categorized in three ways: shows that featured survivors in Europe, those that featured survivors in America, and those that dramatized stories of survivors and their lives under Nazism.²¹ The first of these types, stories from Europe, aired voices of Displaced Persons (DPs) through interviews. In addition to journalists, aid workers in Europe recorded survivors and the recordings were edited for air, giving listeners a sense of “being there.” One such series featured Sadie Sender, a JDC worker stationed in the Zeilsheim DP camp; her interviews, and others like them, allowed survivors to speak for themselves, but framed their voices through the optimism of successful aid work.

For example, the June 6, 1946 episode of “Sadie Sender for JDC in Frankfurt” featured eleven-year-old Helen Opatovska, who had survived two years in Bergen-Belsen. Sender invited Helen to recite a poem in Yiddish and she introduced the poem, saying it “tells the feelings of the

²⁰ Shandler and Katz quote letters from non-Jewish listeners who “express their gratitude to the Seminary for its broadcasts” including one letter from North Carolina that thanks the show for teaching the listener all she knew about Jewish people and helping her understand Jews. Also, in 1946, figures suggest *The Eternal Light* had a listenership of more than 5 million and in 1947 a ratings brochure quoted a listenership figure of 6 million. Shandler and Katz, “Broadcasting American Judaism,” 389, 372-3.

²¹ Hadassah’s radio guide lists these as the three main types of scripts they sent to members and the National Council for Jewish Women’s radio guide lists these three options plus a possible “forum” as a fourth genre. Radio Starter, Box 12, Folder: Radio Starter Kits, 1947, OFPA/Hadassah, and Radio Manual, 1944, Box 131, Folder Public Relations Manuals 1943-1944, NCJW/LOC.

Jews that are still alive in Europe.”²² Helen’s poem spoke of the “darkness coming” and the “children without their mother, murdered.” Yet, Sender framed the poem in a positive, optimistic light, saying, “*That* is the spirit that inspires the surviving Jews in Europe. It must inspire you.” Helen’s mournful poem was transformed into a symbol of hope by Sender for listeners who did not understand Yiddish. Despite this disconnect, Sender still associated the voice of the survivors with the inspiration of American Jews, and in so doing, articulated a dichotomy of survivor voices on the radio: the truth and authenticity of their stories were secondary to their power to motivate needed attention and aid.

The second type of radio broadcast similarly featured survivor voices and celebrated American ideals.²³ *Out of the Wilderness*, sponsored by the USNA, an organization that worked to aid new Jewish immigrants adapt to American life, illustrates how broadcasts about survivors as New Americans integrated America into stories about the Holocaust.²⁴ The broadcast aired on April 6, 1947 and featured five survivors of the Holocaust as part of a special Passover celebration.²⁵ One of the featured survivors was Kurt Maier, and I will return to this broadcast later in the chapter to explore how Maier’s voice was first heard by American audiences, but, *Out of the Wilderness* also reveals how survivor voices in America were shaped to celebrate an

²² “Sadie Sender for JDC in Frankfort,” June 6, 1946, YIVO Sound Archive. Another of this type of radio broadcast is “JDC Interview with a Czech Refugee,” June 27, 1950, YIVO Sound Archive.

²³ Some examples of this type of radio broadcast: *Delayed Pilgrims Dinner*, November 27, 1947, YIVO Sound Archive; *Out of the Wilderness*, April 6, 1947, YIVO Sound Archive; *While Burns Roams*, June 4, 1947, YIVO Sound Archive; *Freedom Train: Delayed Pilgrims*, NCJW, January 16, 1949, YIVO Sound Archive. Survivors were also discussed in an American context through interviews, round tables and debates about immigration policy, but these programs did not feature survivors or speak to their experiences.

²⁴ *Out of the Wilderness*, aired April 6, 1947 on WNYC, YIVO Sound Archive.

²⁵ I consider how Passover became a common time for Holocaust commemoration in postwar American in chapter two. Additionally, see Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 62.

American spirit. David Timmons, the announcer for *Out of the Wilderness* introduced the show as follows:

We invite you to join us as the portrait of freedom grows upon our canvas. For tonight we celebrate the Passover. The Passover is the first holiday of freedom to enter into the conscious of modern man. The Passover is the first holiday of escape and deliverance. Yes, tonight we offer this celebration not as the recollection of a single freedom from the past, but as the warm thing in the hearts of those living and those present as a reaffirmation of hope of these living for the future. The United Service for New Americans, a constituent agency of UJA, whose role is the care and settlement of those survivors of Nazi persecution who find haven on American shores, presents... a Passover celebration for this year, 1947, that equals the sound of freedom.²⁶

Here, Timmons and USNA rely on both Jewish and American symbols to construct an integrated history of freedom. As will be explored in the next section of the chapter, the practice of assimilating Jewish and American themes was a well-practiced tradition.

The third kind of programming dramatized the stories of survivors, using actors to tell their tales.²⁷ While the first two genres allowed survivors to speak directly to the American listening audience, radio dramas best conveyed the personal stories that motivated responses from listeners and were used widely to tell stories about DPs. Radio dramas had grown in use and reputation since the 1930s and was a widely popular genre at the time. Jeffrey Shandler and Elihu Katz argued that it “had emerged as a ‘high’ art form” following the soaps and suspense shows of the 1930s and “demonstrated that radio drama could effectively present topics of serious social concern to the general audience.”²⁸ The genre was also influenced by the success

²⁶ *Out of the Wilderness*, YIVO Sound Archive.

²⁷ Some examples of radio dramas concerned with survivors include: *Displaced*, Marr Sound Archive; *The Golden Door*, “I am a Displaced Person,” Marr Sound Archive; *The Golden Door*, “A Parable for Easter,” Marr Sound Archive; *The Golden Door*, “Joseph in America,” YIVO Sound Archive; *The Golden Door*, “Case History,” June 8, 1947, YIVO Sound Archive; *Escape from a Dream*, USNA, May 18, 1947, YIVO Sound Archive.

²⁸ Shandler and Katz, “Broadcasting American Jewry,” 367.

of *March of Time*, a popular series in the 1930s and '40s that revolutionized the use of re-enacted news events.²⁹ *March of Time* portrayed the news as an amalgamation of traditional announcements and dramatically reproduced scenes, that broadly mixing fact and fiction. Both *Displaced* and *Case History #20,000* were typical of this genre as they reenacted historical events and framed wartime experiences through the postwar reality, drawing the listener to recognize the social consequences of the refugee crisis.

"Delayed Pilgrims" and the American dream

In appealing to broad audiences, organizations focused on aiding DPs appropriated American motifs into the stories of Holocaust survivors. *Out of the Wilderness* offers an introductory example, but another USNA radio special more explicitly inserted the experiences of Jewish survivors into an American story. The *Delayed Pilgrims Dinner* similarly broadcast a dinner for new immigrants, this one at Thanksgiving (it aired on November 27, 1947).³⁰ As the title of the broadcast indicates, the United Service aligned the immigration of Jewish survivors with the arrival of the pilgrims, who also sought freedom from religious persecution. At the time, it was common to refer to the DPs as "Delayed Pilgrims," evoking the American founding myth to explicitly connect America's past as a haven of the oppressed to the ongoing DP crisis. A series of well-known speakers confirmed this rhetorical connection at the event. Actor

²⁹ Seldes attributes the rise in radio dramas to *The March of Time*. He argues that *March of Time* had a great sense of the radio medium and "particularly the sense of the present, that whatever you heard was happening at that moment, was energetically exploited by 'The March of Time' and the mixed sense of adventure and doom, the crackling of cellophane mingled with the sound of the last trump in the portentous voice of the announcer, made this program exciting. It was one of the small number of inventions that gave listeners the experience of radio as a thing in itself, not merely a new way of transmitting the old." Seldes, *The Great Audience*, 119.

³⁰ *Delayed Pilgrims Dinner*, November 27, 1947, YIVO Sound Archive.

Raymond Massey, whose ancestors landed at Salem, addressed the collected new immigrants as “fellow pilgrims” and New York City Mayor William O’Dwyer, who served as the Director of the War Refugee Board in 1945, said, “I greet those who so recently arrived from the Displaced Persons Centers of Europe...to start new lives in America...a country which itself started as a refuge for those who needed shelter.”³¹

In his essay, “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture,” Jonathan Sarna argues that Thanksgiving tropes were commonly adapted for Jewish purposes throughout American Jewish history.³² In fact, he argues that American Jews regularly integrated a range of American themes into Jewish stories as part of both conscious and subconscious efforts to show that American and Jewish values were not only compatible, but mutually enhancing. For organizations concerned with Jewish immigration, Thanksgiving took on particularly political dimensions in the postwar period as the extent of DP administration and possible quota reform were debated in Congress. By referring to the Jewish DPs as Delayed Pilgrims, Jewish and other immigration advocacy groups called attention to those still in need of saving and America’s historical imperative to act.

The survivor voices in *The Delayed Pilgrims Dinner* also integrated America into their stories of the Holocaust, but without referring to themselves as pilgrims. Rather, they embraced the idea of Thanksgiving by expressing gratitude for America’s freedoms and the potential for opportunity. In this way, multiple narratives of America were weaved into an early discourse about the Holocaust. In the broadcast, Mr. Israel Burkenwald, a recent immigrant learning

³¹ *Delayed Pilgrims Dinner*, YIVO Sound Archive.

³² Jonathan D. Sarna, “The Cult of Synthesis in American Jewish Culture.” *Jewish Social Studies*. 5 (1998): 52-79, 52.

English at night school to feel “more America” was invited to address the crowd and the listening audience. In a noticeable accent Mr. Burkenwald said, “I have many reasons to be thankful on this Thanksgiving. I was only 14 when I was taken to Auschwitz. After years of forced labor, you can understand what it means for me to have a home, a job, a country that I can call my very own.”³³ Burkenwald juxtaposed the loss and oppression of Nazi Europe with the freedom and possibility of America in a way that echoed the opening of *Out of the Wilderness*.

The *Delayed Pilgrims Dinner* thus exemplified how American motifs were integrated into early Holocaust representations, particularly how the trope of the Pilgrim was used to tell survivor accounts. Other programs similarly created this association: an episode of *The Eternal Light* that aired on November 23, 1947, the Sunday before Thanksgiving, titled “The Late Comers,” told the history of immigration to America beginning with the Pilgrims and ending with the DPs after World War II, and *The Arrival of Delayed Pilgrims* chronicled the debates over the DP Act in 1948.³⁴ American Jewish communal organizations sponsoring these broadcasts relied on the rhetoric of freedom and the symbolism of Thanksgiving to appeal to non-Jewish American audiences as a way of building emotional connections and to argue that the European Jewish survivors would make successful Americans. A majority of Americans at the time favored narrow immigration policies and feared that new immigrants would take jobs and homes away from returning soldiers and drain the economy. By giving voice to survivors that spoke English, organizations showcased how quickly European foreigners could become Americans, even if that voice was not representative of the Jewish survivors, most of whom could not speak English.

³³ *Delayed Pilgrims Dinner*, YIVO Sound Archive.

³⁴ *The Eternal Light*, “The Late Comers,” November 23, 1947, WOR NY, YIVO Sound Archive; *The Arrival of Delayed Pilgrims*, WNYC, YIVO Sound Archive.

Referring to DPs as Delayed Pilgrims thus became a common political device, used most often by organizations working for immigration policy reform, like the USNA, and the non-sectarian CCDP. The CCDP was founded in 1946 under the chairmanship of Earl G. Harrison, who had toured the DP camps in July 1945 at the request of President Truman. Distressed by what he saw, Harrison worked with the CCDP to advocate for suspended immigration quotas and temporary legislation that would allow displaced persons to legally enter the US.³⁵ The group sent out brochures, published the “Displaced Persons Digest” that aggregated DP related news from around the country, and sponsored a series of radio broadcasts, including *Displaced*, designed to inspire Americans to care about and act on behalf of the DPs of Europe.³⁶ Through these different forms of media, the group sought to shape public opinion about immigration reform and move the debate about refugees and DPs. To do so, the group appealed directly to

³⁵ The CCDP pamphlet “A Brief State of Aims” states that the group sought the entry of 400,000 displaced persons in four years, a number they claimed was American’s “fair share of displaced persons” since “the United States is one of the few countries that has not been ravaged by war; since so few immigrants have come in under our quota law.” This reveals the view of the CCDP that America was poised to take on a larger share of the world’s problems after the war: “After the nightmare of Nazism and Fascism, after the holocaust of World War II, we owe it to ourselves and to the world to be the guardians of freedom and peace. We owe it to ourselves and to the world to take action in solving problems which threaten the peace. The leading problem today is that of the displaced persons!” Citizen’s Committee on Displaced Persons, “A Brief Statement of Aims,” pamphlet, 1947, Historical Society Library Pamphlet Collection (HSLPC), Wisconsin Historical Society (WHS).

³⁶ The CCDP also produced reprints of news articles and radio broadcasts that were related to DP issues. A reprint of a radio forum conducted by the American Federation of Labor on “Should America Open Its Doors to Displaced Persons of Europe?” from April 6, 1947 reveals yet another way in which survivors of the Holocaust were represented on American radio in the postwar period. In forums such as this one, the political question of immigration and the DPs was debated. The radio announcer described the DPs as, “men, women and children...the survivors of Nazi concentration camps, and they represent many countries and almost all religions.” In debates of this kind, the DPs were often referred to broadly as being of all religions. This forum included Congressman William G. Stratton, Republican of Illinois, Robert J. Watt of the American Federation of Labor, Julia Fiebeger of the United States Chamber of Commerce, and Russell Smith of the National Farmers’ Union, who debated the Stratton bill, which would have fulfilled the ambitions of the CCDP and allowed 100,000 displaced persons per year for four years into the United States. Ultimately, the Stratton Bill failed to pass. “Should America Open Its Doors to Displaced Persons of Europe?,” April 6, 1947, Reprinted by the Citizen’s Committee for Displaced Persons, HSLPC/WHS. David Boder also participated in similar radio forums arguing for the need to allow DPs into America. On 30 March 1948, Boder appeared on the local Chicago radio station WGN on Dr. Stokes’ “Your Right to Say It.” For more radio broadcasts sponsored by the Citizen’s Committee, visit: <http://www.wnyc.org/shows/citizens-committee-on-displaced-persons/>. Boder served as the “expert on DPs” against congressman Ed Gossett from Texas for a debate titled, “Should we close the gates to Displaced Persons?” Transcript, Box 16, Folder 2, DPB/UCLA.

non-Jews by minimizing the “Jewish element” of the DP story, exploring Christian themes, and evoking American ideals in entertaining radio dramas.

The 1948 episode of *The Golden Door*, titled, “A Parable for Easter,” reveals these three elements. The show employed the Easter story of death and rebirth to tell the story of DP #234, who died in a DP camp in Germany and fought to enter the US zone of heaven.³⁷ Since DP #234 had no nationality, he posed a problem for the Heavenly Messenger, a story which mirrored the experience of stateless DPs who had nowhere to go on earth and waited for years for quota numbers and visas to become available. To address his dream of becoming American, the broadcast imagined a court made up of the American founding fathers, including Thomas Paine, Thomas Jefferson, and Ben Franklin. They are appalled by the US quota laws and after hearing the struggles of DPs and the limitations of US immigration policy, the founding fathers admit DP #234 to the US area of heaven because “he believes in the basic principles of freedom and liberty and if he had been admitted to the United States while mortal, he would unquestionably, have been a good citizen.”³⁸

In this way, this broadcast illustrates how American narratives were employed to appeal to a broad American audience. While DP #234 was given a Jewish back-story, including his assertion that “there are none of his people in his land and none of his people have a land,” he is never described as Jewish or defined in any religious terms. Additionally, the actor playing DP #234 speaks with no inflection at all, matching the American accents of Jefferson, Paine, and Franklin. These strategic choices and the use of the American founding fathers to validate the

³⁷ *The Golden Door: A Parable for Easter*, audio recording, Marr Sound Archives, University of Missouri, Kansas City. To hear excerpts from “A Parable for Easter” go to <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/memoriesmotifs/a-parable-for-easter>.

³⁸ “A Parable for Easter,” Marr Sound Archive.

potential of survivors to be strong, valuable, and productive Americans was designed to engage non-Jews at Easter. This broadcast provoked American pride in being a haven for the oppressed and validated the needs of DPs with the history of American immigration, in the same way that using the term pilgrim did.

Jewish communal organizations also integrated American tropes and themes into stories about survivors, rendering Jewish Holocaust accounts in American terms. The JDC, for example, broadcast interviews with survivors in Europe and juxtaposed their tragic past with a can-do spirit that echoed American idealism. Marjorie Dutton interviewed Mr. William Kapek, a refugee from Czechoslovakia on June 27, 1950.³⁹ Mr. Kapek survived the war on false papers with help from a Catholic family and when Dutton asked him what he was going to do next he said, “I’m an accountant, but I think an accountant can learn to be a good farmer.” Dutton responded, “Well I think he can with a spirit like that.” Although there was no direct reference to American history, Kapek’s spirit to go somewhere new and start over was decidedly American in nature, which Dutton accentuated for her listeners.

Dutton further addressed America’s role in the story of Holocaust survivors by ending her broadcast with a celebration of the generosity of American donors. Dutton followed her interview with Kapek by talking with Orin Kalen of the JDC in France, who exclaimed, “You see, Marjorie, this is just one case that is representative of hundreds of thousands.”⁴⁰ Dutton replied, “I suppose one of the thousand ways generous money from America is spent.”⁴¹ JDC used the radio and the spirit of American optimism to thank American donors for aiding Mr.

³⁹ *JDC Interview with a Czech Refugee*, June 27, 1950, YIVO Sound Archive.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

Kapek and to inspire further giving to help thousands more like him. In this way, America became part of the survivor story not only through historical narratives about immigration, but through philanthropic giving as well.

Kurt Maier, Paul Muni, and postwar broadcast radio

The USNA sponsored Passover celebration, *Out of the Wilderness*, aired on the radio in April 1947 and illustrated each of these American ideals: optimism, opportunity, haven, and generosity. *Out of the Wilderness* featured musical performances by survivors of Nazism and introduced American audiences to Kurt Maier, a Czech Jew and survivor of Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen, Ohrdruf and Buchenwald.⁴² David Timmons, the announcer, presented Maier with a strong American-accent and a quintessential radio announcer intonation, saying,

You've surely heard of our next guest. His story has been published far and wide in the United States ... his name is Kurt Maier. Once his art was acclaimed, not only in his native land of Czechoslovakia, but throughout the world. Then the Nazis changed that world. The concert hall became the concentration camp. And the Nazis called upon Kurt Maier to play when they shipped him to that terrible place called Auschwitz. Today, Mr. Maier is here. He is the lone survivor of 86 persons of his family. Need we mention what his clean, free music means to him today...⁴³

Timmons again juxtaposed the freedom of America with the oppression of the concentration camps to highlight America as a haven for Jewish victims of Nazism. Following this introduction, Maier directly addressed the audience with his accented voice. He spoke clear and effective English, but his accent was foreign and identifiably European. Maier said, "There are

⁴² *Out of the Wilderness*, YIVO Sound Archive.

⁴³ Ibid. To hear this clip, go to: <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/memoriesmotifs/media/kurt-maier-out-of-the-wilderness-intro-1>.

thousands of people brought here by the United Service, who, just as I, lost their mothers during the Nazi persecution. In memory, I want to play the old familiar song, *My Yiddishe Mama*.” He went on to play *My Yiddishe Mama* and two other songs, one of which Maier noted, “we have sung it in the darkest hours, in the various concentration camps . . . for all of us who went through the Nazi terror.”⁴⁴

In this way, Maier’s voice represented thousands of survivors and yet still spoke to his own unique experience, a “story” that Timmons told the audience had been told “far and wide.” At that time, Maier’s “story” referred to his “Holocaust story,” consisting of his experiences in Auschwitz, Sachsenhausen and Ohrdruf and his survival that depended on his musical talent. Yet Maier’s “story” was also one of his continuous displacement, from Karlsbad to Prague to ghettos, concentration camps and finally to a sense of “homecoming” in America. As such, Maier’s story reflected a dual story, one of persecution and survival and one of displacement and immigration. In both ways, the story was, indeed, told far and wide: Maier’s experiences were told in the *New Yorker* magazine and then also in a half-hour radio drama. In September 1947, just months after *Out of the Wilderness* aired, the *New Yorker* magazine featured a nine-page article detailing Maier’s story. The article, “Displaced,” was written by reporter-at-large Daniel Lang and told Maier’s life story, from before the war in Karlsbad, to his deportation to Auschwitz, and his liberation from Buchenwald.⁴⁵ In the year that followed, Lang’s article was adapted for a radio drama also titled *Displaced*.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Ibid. To hear Maier play *My Yiddishe Mama* and *Ich hab kein heimatland*, go to: <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/memoriesmotifs/kurt-maier-out-of-the-wilderness?path=kurt-maier>

⁴⁵ Daniel Lang, “Displaced,” *The New Yorker*, 13 September 1947, 100 – 111.

⁴⁶ *Displaced*, sound recording, YIVO Sound Archive and Marr Sound Archives.

So, Maier's story was represented at least three different times between 1946 and 1947 for American audiences, in three different genres. First, Maier spoke to American audiences in *Out of the Wilderness* with his own voice, although his piano skills were portrayed and his "story" largely omitted. Then, Maier was interviewed by Lang and a detailed version of his experience under Nazism was published in print. Lang quoted Maier, but the article expressed Lang's point of view. Finally, the CCDP transformed Lang's article into a thirty-minute radio drama. The radio piece included Lang and Maier as characters, both portrayed by actors, and dramatized the interview between Lang and Maier as well as Maier's experience in Nazi Europe. Radio transformed Maier's story from a direct interview into a multi-temporal and ruptured audio narrative that conveyed the horror of life under Nazism, while also asserting the need for American intervention in postwar problems.

As the title "Displaced" suggested, the story of Maier's persecution and survival as featured in Lang's September 1947 *New Yorker* article was told through the lens of his displacement and eventual immigration to America, making the article both a detailed narrative of Maier's experience under Nazism and a story of his arrival in America. Lang integrated these two narrative threads, illustrating Sarna's concept of synthesis by asserting that Maier, and DPs in general, were America's latest pilgrims. Lang's article began, "One of the oratorical flourishes that almost every politician uses when addressing a group of foreign-born citizens is to hail America as the haven of the oppressed. He tells of the coming of the Pilgrims."⁴⁷ Lang continued by placing the DP into a long history of American pilgrims: "...in another year or so...the politician will be able to add a modern category, the DPs or displaced persons."

⁴⁷ Lang, "Displaced," 100.

It was common in the postwar period to call DPs “Delayed Pilgrims,” especially by organizations engaged with immigration policy reform. It is not surprising, then, that the ideas of displacement and American immigration framed Maier’s story both in the *New Yorker* and on the radio. The broadcast, like Lang’s article, followed Maier’s story from Karlsbad to Auschwitz and eventually to New York by dramatizing multiple scenes from Maier’s life under Nazism. Maier’s story, like the “Parable for Easter,” served the purposes of the CCDP and highlighted the potential for the United States to be a haven for strong, creative, and grateful refugees. In the *New Yorker* article, the story of immigration played out when Lang met Maier in the waiting area of Pier 86, after his ship, the Steamship Marine Perch, landed in New York.⁴⁸ Lang explained, “I was on hand in the hope of learning about what it meant to a person to be, in the cold language of our time, ‘displaced.’”⁴⁹ From the beginning, then, Lang’s story humanized the conceptual category of DPs. The radio piece echoed this language, keeping the title, and beginning with the following announcement:

The word, ‘displaced’ has a new and horrible meaning in our language when it is applied to a human being. This is the story of a displaced human being, one of hundreds of thousands...what happened to Kurt Maier is neither more nor less horrible than what happened to thousands of other Displaced Persons. Perhaps that’s why it’s the best story to tell. Perhaps that’s why Daniel Lang chose to interview Kurt Maier...⁵⁰

As the announcer made clear, Maier’s story was meant to be representative of hundreds of thousands of other DPs. In this way, Maier’s voice was both his own and one that spoke for all

⁴⁸ The Marine Perch left Bremen on 18 July 1946. Maier is listed on the manifest of the Marine Perch, Document Number 81649948#1, International Tracing Service, Accessed at USHMM, Summer 2012.

⁴⁹ Lang, *Displaced*, 100.

⁵⁰ *Displaced*, sound recording.

DPs. This echoed Maier's own statement in *Out of the Wilderness* when he referred to the thousands who lost their mothers.

While Lang did not elaborate on why he chose to feature Maier, his article described an aid worker who introduced the two men; seemingly, the choice to talk with Maier was not Lang's, but arranged by the USNA, the group that sponsored Maier's transport to America. Certainly, the choice was not random. Maier spoke very clear English and his skill as a musician made him an ideal public figure. He had been well known before the war and brought talent and creative energy to America.⁵¹ Given these details, Maier was an excellent poster boy for DPs in America, but a problematic representative of the thousands of DPs still in Europe. Yet for Lang and the audiences that read and heard Maier's story, he defined what it meant to be displaced.

Following the story's frame about displacement, both versions of Maier's story chronologically depict Maier's experiences under Nazism. They began in Karlsbad, Czechoslovakia (Karlovy Vary) at the moment the Germans were awarded the Sudetenland in the Munich Accords and Maier fled to Prague.⁵² There, he established himself and his mother until the Germans invaded. Eventually, they were deported to Theresienstadt, where they lived

⁵¹ In her MA thesis about USNA radio programs, Roberta Newman suggests that the USNA featured the "best of" the refugees in order to portray the most positive idea of DPs. As such, in the 1944 National Refugee Service film, *The New Americans*, Albert Einstein and Thomas Mann were featured. She asserts that the intentional representation from USNA was on refugees who had successfully adjusted to American life. Roberta Newman, "Delayed Pilgrims: the radio programs of the United Service for New Americans, 1947-48," MA Thesis, NYU, 1996, 20. Copy of thesis obtained through the author.

⁵² The basic narrative described here is as his experience was expressed by Lang and in the radio drama. From documents acquired at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, I can add: Maier was born in Karlovy Vary on February 17, 1911 and moved to Prague in 1938. He was deported to Terezin on December 4, 1941 and to Auschwitz on October 1, 1944. He was then deported to Ohrdruf in December of 1944, to Sachsenhausen in February 1945 and Buchenwald in March 1945. He was finally liberated from Buchenwald on April 11, 1945. Deportation to Terezin and Auschwitz documented on Ústřední Kartotéka – Transporty, document number 5012316#1, International Tracing Service, accessed at US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Summer 2012. Additional deportation information from Document number 40717701#1 International Tracing Service, accessed at US Holocaust Memorial Museum, Summer 2012.

for 2½ years. Maier's mother worked in the women's section, sewing uniforms for the Germans, until she was deported to Auschwitz. Soon after, Maier was also deported to Auschwitz, where he learned that his mother had been sent directly to the gas chamber.⁵³

At Auschwitz, Maier avoided working in the mines by being assigned to the camp band.⁵⁴ Maier was sent to play music while prisoners were being led to the gas chambers.⁵⁵ Lang quoted Maier as saying, "The idea was for us to drown out their cries, but we never could."⁵⁶ After two months at Auschwitz, Maier was sent to Ohrdruf, a slave labor camp where he worked on a V-2 launching site until he was again assigned to play music – this time for the camp Commandant, Herr Stibitz. According to Lang, Maier recalled that as the allies drew closer to Ohrdruf, the commandant became more erratic, making Maier polish his shoes and soap him while in the shower – degrading Maier to make himself feel more powerful.

In February 1945, Maier was sent to Sachsenhausen where he worked in an underground airplane factory and only a few weeks later, in March, Maier was put on a death march to Buchenwald, where, in April 1945, he was liberated by the Americans. In discussing liberation with Lang, Maier described that he was part of an effort at revenge. Lang wrote, "The men in the Buchenwald underground broke out guns they had secreted, armed the other prisoners,

⁵³ In Lang's article, he described the gas chambers by saying that old people were sent directly to their deaths, while the young and healthy were not. Lang's language suggests a logical approach to selections at Auschwitz, one that does not necessarily reflect the historical reality. I don't know if this was Maier's description or Lang's but it echoes the way Cecilia Razovsky and Boder tried to make sense of selections (chapter one).

⁵⁴ Perhaps Maier was assigned to the Fürstengrube subcamp where Jewish slave workers began mining in 1943. USHMM Holocaust Encyclopedia of Camps and Ghettos, Vol 1A, 239- 241.

⁵⁵ Evidence suggests that Maier also played music while in Terezin, accompanying theater performances in the ghetto. Poster for Smejte se s nami and others, Hermanova sbirka/Herrmann Sammlung, the Magdeburg barracks at the Terezin Memorial. Available in Lisa Peschel, *Performing Captivity, Performing Escape: Cabarets and Plays from the Terezin/Theresienstadt Ghetto* (London: Seagull Books, 2014). Thank you to Lisa Peschel for making the poster available to me.

⁵⁶ Lang, "Displaced," 103.

including Maier, and went on a shooting spree of their own, picking off any Nazi they could find.”⁵⁷ In the radio broadcast, this scene was narrated by Maier: “Then the Nazis fled and the men of Buchenwald underground, they brought out such guns as they had and they armed us. We prisoners went on a shooting spree of our own. Picking off any Nazi we could.”⁵⁸ By directly addressing attempts for revenge, these earliest accounts challenge assertions that revenge and other sensitive issues were taboo in survivor narratives.⁵⁹ Maier’s description of the underground at Buchenwald suggests that survivors were comfortable talking about these issues in the postwar period and that audiences were open to hearing about these kinds of Holocaust stories.

After liberation, Maier fell ill with typhus and recovered for six weeks in a hospital the Americans fashioned in a former SS barrack. After recovering, Maier was again asked to play music, this time for the officers of the American army and he took on the job with excitement and enthusiasm. He remained in Germany until he was able to contact his sister in New York and she sponsored him to come to the US. Both versions of “Displaced” largely skip over Maier’s time in Teresina, which heavily centers his story on his six - seven months in concentration camps as opposed to the two and a half years he spent in the ghetto.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Lang, “Displaced,” 108.

⁵⁸ *Displaced*, sound recording.

⁵⁹ For more about the debate about when survivors started to talk about “taboos” see Christopher Browning, *Remembering Survival: Inside a Nazi Slave-Labor Camp*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009); Naomi Seidman, “Elie Wiesel and the Scandal of Jewish Rage,” *Jewish Social Studies*, New Series, 3:1 (Autumn 1996): 1-19, 8; Henry Greenspan, “The Awakening of Memory: Survivor Testimony in the First Years after the Holocaust, and Today,” Monna and Otto Weinmann Lecture Series, 17 May 2000, 19. Available at: <http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/publications/occasional/2001-02/paper.pdf>.

⁶⁰ Early accounts seem to similarly favor a concentration camp-dominated narrative about survivors. Although representations of the Warsaw Ghetto were widespread because of the uprising.

This general narrative defined Maier's story for readers of the *New Yorker* and the audience of *Displaced*, but it was given voice on radio by Paul Muni, the Academy and Tony award-winning star of *The Story of Louis Pasteur*, *The Good Earth*, and the 1932 *Scarface*. Hollywood star and Yiddish stage veteran, Muni was born in Lemberg, Galicia and immigrated to America as a young child so that he spoke English with an American accent.⁶¹ When Maier (Muni as Maier) was first introduced in *Displaced*, his voice was differentiated from Mr. Lang's American accent (also portrayed by an actor) as somewhat foreign, but by more of an inflection than an accent. Muni adopted a way of speaking that was not American, but he did not embrace an accent that would have indicated Maier's European roots. That is to say, Muni's portrayal of Maier was quite different from Maier's actual accented voice in *Out of the Wilderness* and certainly different than thousands of DPs who could not speak English at all.⁶²

Muni lent his voice to other radio and film productions about the plight of the DPs in the postwar period, including episodes of *The Eternal Light*.⁶³ Celebrity voices were popular in radio performances at large and in the range of philanthropic appeals in the Jewish community.⁶⁴ For

⁶¹ Throughout his career, Muni was best known for his ability to become anyone through expert makeup, but he began performing on radio, on Lux Radio Theater, to rave reviews in 1935. In 1946, he moved from Los Angeles to New York to perform in *The Flag is Born* on Broadway. *The Flag is Born* was produced by "American League for a free Palestine" at the Alvin Theater in New York. The cast also included a young Marlon Brando. Profit from *The Flag is Born* (\$275,000) went to support Israel. The money bought a naval liner, which was named the "SS Ben Hecht" after the writer of the play. *The Flag is Born* was more than a part to Muni, it was a chance to perform his support for the State of Israel and his performance in *Displaced* may be seen as a similarly personal performance to him; one that portrayed his own political concerns. Jerome Lawrence, *Actor, the Life and Times of Paul Muni*, (New York: Putnam, 1974) 207, 291.

⁶² For more about the relationship of English to Holocaust testimony, see Alan Rosen, "Sounds of Defiance: The Holocaust, Multilingualism, and the Problem of English (Lincoln : University of Nebraska Press, 2005). To hear the difference in accents, listen at <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/memoriesmotifs/kurt-maier-displaced-radio?path=kurt-maier>.

⁶³ Shandler and Katz, "Broadcasting American Jewry," 372. He also narrated the UJA short film, *The Will to Live*, which documented DPs who had found homes in Israel. List of "Israel Resources," Box 36, Folder 25, American Jewish Congress, AJHS.

⁶⁴ As has been discussed in chapters one and three, Orson Welles narrated film and radio projects including *Battle for Survival*, a documentary film portraying the fate of the surviving Jews of Europe, and Eddie Cantor, Henry

Displaced, Muni's famous voice and Maier's engaging story were a successful pairing. Maier's story was, in fact, an apt fit for radio. As a musician, Maier contributed music for the final production; music saved him in Auschwitz and Ohrdruf and connected him to the American soldiers after liberation. Piano music filled the scenes of the broadcast, providing historically relevant detail and entertaining background music.

Displaced also used music for narrative purposes as dramatic organ music signaled transitions between scenes. The collection of scenes dramatized on the radio was different from the story written by Lang and the juxtaposition of scenes is one of the biggest transformations from print to radio. Lang's article was a linear story: he went to the pier, he met Maier, and he conveyed Maier's story with some direct quotations. In adapting this story into a dramatic performance, one dependent on some level of entertainment, the radio version added several layers so that multiple stories progressed at once. First, Maier was at the pier, having arrived on the Marine Perch, and waited for his sister. This comprised the present action of the drama. Then, Maier talked to Lang, which was also part of the present drama, but it added a layer of memory-making, dramatizing the process of "giving testimony."⁶⁵ The audience heard Maier's story, but also the process of narrating or creating that story. The final layer of the program was

Fonda, and Dick Powell all recorded short radio commercial spots for the JDC SOS program, using their celebrity to inspire participation and giving in support of overseas needs. These radio spots are another example of how radio transmitted representations of Holocaust survivors to American audiences. JDC created nine one-minute radio spots that relied on the speaker's celebrity to motivate giving. The transcribed recordings were sent to local SOS chairmen with instructions about how to best place the appeals on local stations: they were to be played during weeks of high SOS activity and introduced with set scripts (also included in the package to the chairmen) that suggested the radio spot highlight local activity. Memo from Robert Dolins to SOS Chairmen and contributing communities conducting Fall Campaigns, September 8, 1948, 45/54, #1344, JDC-NY and SOS Commercials, YIVO Sound Archive.

⁶⁵ For a deeper discussion of the process of giving testimony, see Lawrence Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), Geoffrey Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony*, second edition, (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2010).

the past. Muni, as Maier, narrated his experience under Nazism, but some scenes were reenacted so that the radio drama jumped back and forth between past and present, imagining significant moments of Maier's life during the war.⁶⁶ Through these multiple layers of story telling and imaginative reenactments, *Displaced* offered its audience a Holocaust narrative that Lang's print piece could not, shifting between time and representational mode.

The dramatization process altered the story in significant ways. First, replicating the interview process performed the act of giving testimony. Even though the intention of the drama was not to document historical truth or preserve survivor testimony as a source of witnessing. Nonetheless, the interview model depicted portrayed Lang as the listener to Maier's witness. Lawrence Langer and Henry Greenspan have theorized the interdependent relationship between a survivor and their interviewer based on the practice of testimony collection from the 1970s, 80s and 90s. According to Langer, the interviewer becomes witness to the survivor telling their story and, in this way, plays an essential role in creating testimony. He further argues that the audience of a video taped testimony also becomes a witness and the interviewer and the audience both take on the responsibility of understanding the survivor and the world of the Holocaust that the survivor "reenacts."⁶⁷ Greenspan has similarly articulated how the interviewer, or partner in "dialogue," must go on the journey with the survivor. Although Langer and Greenspan do not agree on other essential elements of survivor memory, they both contend that the articulation and

⁶⁶ In the last three decades, scholars have extensively explored concerns about the "Limits of Representation" and the ethics of performance and recreation of the Holocaust. Scholars are skeptical of recreating events of the Holocaust, particularly in a performative and fictionalized way. This kind of theoretical discussion was not present in the late 1940s and the practice of reenacting historical events was very popular on the radio. For more about the "Limits of Representation" see Saul Friedländer, ed. *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "final Solution,"* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992). The debate continues to grow and change as evidenced at a 2012 "follow up" conference at UCLA, "History Unlimited: Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture" April 21 – 23, 2012.

⁶⁷ Langer emphasizes, "The witness does not *tell* the story; he reenacts it." Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies*, 27.

construction of Holocaust memory is a process that necessarily involves both a speaker and a listener.⁶⁸ As Dori Laub summed up, “the listener” of the narrative “comes to be a participant and a co-owner of the traumatic event: through his very listening, he comes to partially experience the trauma in himself.”⁶⁹

Displaced can be understood as a performance of this process. Lang’s questions initiate the dramatized flashbacks as the show invited the audience to follow Lang on the journey to Maier’s past. In this way, Lang’s character in the radio drama introduced key scenes and served as a guide into the testimonial experience. Transforming Lang into a central character in *Displaced* made him not just a journalist or observer, but a part of the memory making process and he can be seen as a parallel to the interviewer in contemporary video testimonies, where they are heard audibly but not seen visually. As such, the radio program complicated the printed article not only by dramatizing Maier’s life under Nazism, but also the process of telling that story.

The transformation also complicated Maier’s Holocaust story directly by adding sound effects and heightened drama. For example, at Ohrdruf, before being picked by the Commandant, Maier worked as a slave laborer. In the *New Yorker* Lang wrote, “One afternoon, when Maier did not seem to be working fast enough, a guard wearing brass knuckles went to work on him and permanently scarred his chest.”⁷⁰ The same scene in the radio version transferred the punishment from Maier to the man next to him and rather than describe a beating,

⁶⁸ Henry Greenspan, *On Listening to Holocaust Survivors: Beyond Testimony*, second edition, (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2010).

⁶⁹ Dori Laub, “Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening,” in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, (New York: Routledge, 1991), 57 – 74, 57.

⁷⁰ Lang, “Displaced,” 104.

the show took advantage of the audio capabilities of radio to add a poignant and shocking gunshot sound effect. The scene was played between two actors, both employing heavy accents. One portrayed a German guard and shouted that all the men should “get back to work.”⁷¹ The other actor, portraying a prisoner, with what might be heard as a heavily Jewish accent, responded, “Please, I must rest. Just for a moment...I tried [to work] but I can’t.” His voice was shaky and strongly inflected as he begged with the German guard. The guard had the strongest accent of all and with an aggressive tone barked, “If you can’t work you are no use to us. So...” Then a loud clap (which sounded like two wooden boards slapping together) indicated that the German guard had shot the old prisoner, presumably, although not directly addressed as, a Jew. The scene ended with the German guard grunting, “Now, get to work!”⁷² This was immediately followed by dramatic organ music signaling a switch back to the present action.

The gunshot exposed a narrative leap from the article to the radio drama. There was no gunshot in the *New Yorker* article, suggesting it may have been fabricated for radio. It is, certainly, a more dynamic audio moment, which may have justified the change. Yet, such an addition to Meier’s story is unsettling – it dramatized the nature of the moment, revealing the ultimate consequence of the fear and danger Meier’s beating provoked, but it veered further from Meier’s story as told to Lang, multiplying the distance between Meier’s voice and the narration of his story. This change reveals succinctly how the practices and norms of radio dramas shaped survivor narratives at the time and defined how Holocaust stories became voiced in postwar America.

⁷¹ To hear this sound effect and the various accents, listen at <http://scalar.usc.edu/hc/memoriesmotifs/media/displaced-i-was-given-a-wheelbarrow-and-a-pick-and-shovel>.

⁷² *Displaced*, sound recording.

Additional changes from print to radio similarly reveal the consequences of construction Holocaust narratives for postwar American radio. Lang wrote about the Pier waiting area by noting the range of DPs arriving from the Marine Perch. He saw, “an elderly Polish priest,” “an even more elderly Austrian woman,” and a “young handsome German woman holding a small girl by the hand” as well as the variety of aid workers, who he described as, “representatives of Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant welfare groups.”⁷³ The diversity of the DPs and aid workers was echoed in the radio broadcasts by an aid worker who explained that Catholic, Protestant and Jewish organizations were all present. Both of these references recognized the different relief organizations in America that responded to a diverse population of DPs in Europe and such language was widely evoked to remind Americans that this was a problem that affected all religious groups. The radio broadcast overtly referred to the DP crisis in Europe and the need for legislation. Before Maier was first introduced, a female aid worker told Lang that she hoped the ship, the Marine Perch, would make more trips back and forth to Europe “when Congress passes legislation admitting displaced persons.”⁷⁴

The explicit mention of the need for legislation was echoed at the end of the broadcast. After Maier’s story ended and the music flourished, Paul Muni was invited to speak as Paul Muni.⁷⁵ He referred to the DPs waiting in Europe as the “helpless victims of tyranny and brutality,” who were also, “healthy, husky human beings.” He urged listeners to care by saying, “Whether they live to breathe the air of freedom and health and happiness or sink into despair

⁷³ Lang, “Displaced,” 100.

⁷⁴ *Displaced*, sound recording.

⁷⁵ It was common at the time for radio programs to have addendum. *The Eternal Light* serves as just one example.

and death is for *us* to decide. The choice is *ours*.”⁷⁶ Muni argued that Americans (all Americans) could and must be the saviors of the DPs. He invoked the New Testament story of the Samaritan who stops to help a fallen stranger as a means of provoking action among the American audience and ended by claiming, “...it is for us to choose, remembering for that choice, we stand accountable to our conscious and to God.”⁷⁷ Muni’s appeal reiterated the idea that Americans (here, he spoke to all Americans – not just American Jews) were individually responsible for the lives and deaths of Jewish survivors and further suggested that Americans were forced to choose between generosity and complicity.

Neither of these elements, the gunshot nor the explicit plea for action, were present in Lang’s printed work. They were additions from the Citizen’s Committee and endorsed by Paul Muni, that suggest how radio, as a medium, shaped Holocaust narratives for American audiences. The use of radio programs, such as *Displaced*, as advocacy tools was practiced widely among organizations concerned about the DPs in postwar Europe and the CCDP produced *Displaced* as well as numerous episodes of *The Golden Door*, including “I am a Displaced Person,” “A Parable for Easter,” “Joseph in America” and others, that argued for necessary temporary legislation for DPs.⁷⁸ Some of these productions featured explicitly Jewish survivors and represented the Jewish experience under Nazism; others, like “I am a Displaced Person,” which told the story of Silva Maldist, an Estonian native, featured non-Jewish DPs.⁷⁹ The

⁷⁶ *Displaced*, sound recording. Emphasis in original.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

⁷⁸ “I am a Displaced Person,” audio recording, Marr Sound Archives; “A Parable for Easter,” audio recording, Marr Sound Archives; “Joseph in America,” audio recording, YIVO Sound Archives.

⁷⁹ “I am a Displaced Person,” is a dramatization of Silva Maldist’s experience under Nazism. Miss Maldist was a native of Estonia and was able to enter the US in order to study languages in America at Bennington College in Vermont. Silva was not Jewish and her story detailed her time performing slave labor in Germany. In the dramatization, the actress portraying Miss Maldist had an American accent, but the Nazis in the story had sinister,

majority of CCDP productions, however, discussed the diversity of DPs and did not specify the religion of the main character.⁸⁰ Nonetheless, all of their broadcasts, meant to inform the American public about the problems faced by DPs, presented Americans with ways to help. Narratives about DPs presented by the CCDP showed refugees as honest people, eager to get to America to work hard and live in freedom, but they also depicted grave circumstances in the DP camps and monumental challenges facing the majority of DPs. As a result, CCDP productions portrayed DPs as enemies of tyranny, willing to fight for freedom.⁸¹

The multiple representations of DPs on the radio must be read in the context of the CCDP insistence on American immigration reform and the emerging Cold War. Many publications concerned with DPs at the time, including most publicity and fundraising materials from Jewish organizations like the World Jewish Congress, ORT, UJA and others, described the vitality of survivors in an effort to represent them as prospective healthy members of an American society. In trying to motivate Americans to care about DPs and more open immigration, the DPs had to be seen as capable of working, of being successful members of society, and not as desperate and destitute. These organizations had to walk a fine balance between communicating the urgent need of the DPs and yet asserting that they could be active and healthy Americans. Muni's

foreign accents. At the end of the program, Silva spoke for herself with a slight European accent. *The Golden Door*, "I am a Displaced Person," Marr Sound Archives.

⁸⁰ *The Golden Door*, "A Parable for Easter," Marr Sound Archives.

⁸¹ *The Golden Door*, "Joseph in America" narrated the story of Joseph Marshok, a watchmaker who survived a concentration camp because he could fix clocks. Marshok was not explicitly referred to as Jewish and the story is more focused on Marshok as part of the new labor force in the US. Upon arrival in America, Marshok joined the CIO and was elected to his local Patriots Day Committee because he knew what it was like "to live under tyranny and under freedom." The broadcast featured a speech by the President of the CIO who said that there is no basis for fear that admitting immigrants would "jeopardize American jobs," rather, "they know tyranny and its destruction, here they will work for democracy and its freedom." This production was specifically designed to combat the fear that DPs would take away American jobs, a strong part of the argument against opening immigration quotas. *The Golden Door*, "Joseph in America," YIVO Sound Archives.

comments clearly articulated this balance – the DPs were, “the helpless victims of tyranny and brutality” and still “healthy husky, human beings.” As such, *Displaced* represented the complex ways Holocaust survivors were framed in America at that time.

“Hannah” and Hadassah’s 1947 Fundraising Campaign

Even organizations not invested in American immigration used broadcast radio as an advocacy tool and portrayed survivors as both in need of help and yet capable and independent. Hadassah’s radio script for the drama, *Case History #20,000* demonstrates how Zionist organizations, committed to DP emigration to Palestine, and then Israel, similarly used radio to appeal to a diverse audience of donors and mimicked an interview style that portrayed memory making.⁸² *Case History #20,000* is also a telling example of how radio programs about DPs in the early postwar period disassociated survivor voices from their own stories.

Like *Displaced*, *Case History #20,000* was an adaptation of a print story; one that was first collected for use in the 1947 Hadassah fundraising campaign. The story of Hannah, a young survivor brought to Palestine by Youth Aliyah, was told in a brochure for Youth Aliyah called “Ask...Hannah” and was later transformed into a radio script to be distributed to local Hadassah chapters.⁸³ While *Displaced* was a transcribed production, pre-recorded for broadcast, *Case History #20,000* was intended to be performed live and the printed script is the only extant record. The script was part of an annual programming guide that included general program ideas,

⁸² *Case History #20,000* Script, 1, Box 12, Folder: Radio Starter Kits, 1947, OFPA/Hadassah.

⁸³ “Ask...Hannah,” brochure, Box 12, Folder: Presidents and Chairmen Circulates, 1946, Oct – Dec, OFPA/Hadassah.

specific communications instructions, and templates for Hadassah chapter radio chairmen. The kit included other radio scripts and an additional Youth Aliyah script of an interview between the radio announcer and the local chapter Youth Aliyah chairman.⁸⁴

After Hitler came to power in Germany, Henrietta Szold, founder of Hadassah, worked to provide sanctuary for as many Jewish children as possible in Palestine through a new program called Youth Aliyah.⁸⁵ The program grew throughout the pre-war and war years and, following the war, expanded beyond Europe, bringing Jewish orphans from around the world to Palestine and, after 1948, to Israel.⁸⁶ Youth Aliyah was administered by the Jewish Agency in Palestine, but in 1935, Hadassah negotiated the right to be recognized as the sole Youth Aliyah fundraising agent in the United States by committing \$60,000 towards the program in two years. In those two years Hadassah raised over \$250,000 for Youth Aliyah.⁸⁷ Even after the initial enthusiasm, Hadassah took seriously its role as fund raiser for Youth Aliyah, a departure from its core work with the Hadassah Medical Organization. They enlisted celebrities, engaged other organizations,

⁸⁴ Radio scripts also differed from transcribed radio programs in that they could traverse organizational boundaries and allow smaller communities to tell well-developed stories. For example, the B'nai B'rith Hillel started the Penn State Hillel Radio Hour and dedicated 15 minutes of programming each week to a Jewish program that engaged both Jewish and non-Jewish students. Although the students developed their own programs, they also edited scripts from other radio programs, including "Battle of Warsaw Ghetto" from Morton Wishengrad's *The Eternal Light* script and "When I Think of Seraye" adapted from an address of Rabbi Milton Steinberg on behalf of UJA. Hillel *Guideposts* June 1946, 7.

⁸⁵ For a detailed history of Youth Aliyah see, Marian G. Greenberg, *There is Hope for your Children: Youth Aliyah, Henrietta Szold, and Hadassah* (Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America, 1986). For a more critical approach, see Sandra Berliant Kadosh, "Ideology vs. Reality: Youth Aliyah and the Rescue of Jewish Children During the Holocaust, 1933-1945," Dissertation, Columbia University, 1995.

⁸⁶ In the years prior to the war, children from Nazi occupied countries, including Germany, Austria and Czechoslovakia, were brought to Palestine and placed in youth villages or settled at vocational schools for job training. During the war some children were still able to get to Palestine, but communication and travel hindered the efforts of Youth Aliyah. In the postwar period, representatives from Youth Aliyah sought out children who had survived in hiding, with the resistance movements, or in flight and brought thousands to Palestine. From the founding of the state on, Youth Aliyah aided Jewish children around the world, bringing children from North Africa, Iraq, Iran and elsewhere to Israel. Greenberg, *Hope for your Children*, 4.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 92.

and inspired giving in the US and England throughout the war years.⁸⁸ By the time the war ended, Hadassah had already developed loyal donors to Youth Aliyah and established Youth Aliyah committees among Hadassah members and chapters.

Hadassah leaders recognized the importance of audio-visual media for publicity and fundraising purposes, using radio and film technology to publicize their Youth Aliyah work. Films produced by the national office were rented out to local chapters, but the organization's radio strategy relied more heavily on local leaders to build relationships with radio stations and develop content that fit their local efforts. NCJW similarly developed radio strategies that trained local leaders to take responsibility for publicity and the 1944 Radio Manual announced, "Radio is becoming one of the most important media for transmitting ideas. Through a broadcast it is possible to create good will, win respect and impart the information which is necessary for a better understanding and wider appreciation of Council."⁸⁹ Radio programs for local chapters aimed to achieve each of these goals.

Hadassah also articulated the importance of personal stories to emotionally inspire donors. Staff members in Palestine collected case histories about Youth Aliyah children and sent folders to the New York offices for publicity purposes.⁹⁰ A 1945 fundraising pamphlet, "Escape to Life," featured stories from the perspective of young survivors and articulated the power of the first person story in fundraising for Youth Aliyah:

⁸⁸ Ibid, 98.

⁸⁹ Radio Manual, 1944, Box 131, Folder: Public Relations Manuals 1943-1944, NCJW/LOC. Similar manuals are held in Box 131, Folder: Public Relations Manuals, 1947 – 1957, NCJW/LOC.

⁹⁰ Folders of case-histories are abundant in the archives of Youth Aliyah, in the Hadassah papers. For one example, Publicity Stories 1946 – 1947, Box 23, Folder 172, YAP/Hadassah. Also, each monthly Hadassah bulletin, *Headlines* contained a Youth Aliyah story that generally featured one young person's experience of getting to and thriving in Palestine/Israel.

Have you read the eye-witness accounts of the extermination chambers, the death camps, the terror and disease which the fascists left behind them in Europe? Have you been shaken with anger and disgust? Do you want to do something immediately for the Jewish children who were among the first victims of this insanity? You can – through Youth Aliyah. Help us take thousands more of Europe’s Jewish children out of this atmosphere of death and destruction, far away from the places where they were witness to murder and rapine. Help us teach them to laugh, to play, to study and work, to become upstanding men and women, good citizens of a democratic world.⁹¹

For Hadassah, the power to fundraise for a project like Youth Aliyah was through the first person accounts of Nazi persecution. They inspired “anger and disgust” and then urged their donors to turn that anger into action, by supporting Youth Aliyah. The brochure “Ask...Hannah” was part of this tradition and *Case History #20,000* transformed that strategy for radio.

In 1947, Hadassah waged a campaign designed around the 20,000th child rescued by Youth Aliyah. One of a series of brochures that offered case histories, “Ask...Hannah” told the story of twelve-year-old Hannah.⁹² The pamphlet called attention to its own power in providing donors and members with access to the voice of young survivors by encouraging readers to “Let our Youth Aliyah children speak for themselves...”⁹³ Even though this voice was in print, Hadassah recognized the value of an eyewitness account and this approach was even more effective when the stories were by and about children. As such, the simple, straightforward

⁹¹ “Escape to Life” brochure, Box 21, Folder 155: Hadassah Fundraising Materials – 1945, YAP/Hadassah.

⁹² A cover letter dated January 1947 introduces the new brochure, “‘Ask...Hannah...’ is your new Youth Aliyah case-history folder. It takes the place of ‘Diary by Joseph’ which you used so successfully last year, and like the previous case-history is a true story of the sufferings endured by a Jewish child who has been rescued and given a new lease on life by Youth Aliyah.” Letter and brochure, January 1947 Publicity Kit, Box 12, Folder: Presidents and Chairmen Circulates, 1946, Oct – Dec, OFPA/Hadassah.

⁹³ “Ask...Hannah” brochure.

language of the brochure suggested that a young person wrote the story even though Hannah was described as “wizened,” “tense,” and with a “hollow” voice.⁹⁴

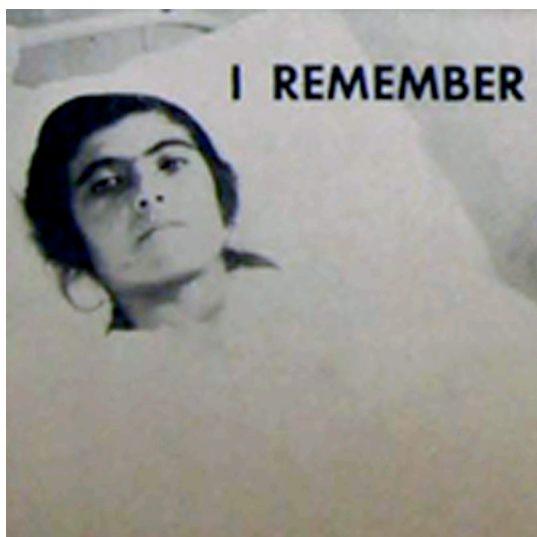


Figure 9, Figure 10: Hannah’s image and story were the focus of the 1947 Youth Aliyah fundraising campaign in America that celebrated Hannah as the 20,000th Youth Aliyah child brought to Palestine. The two images visually represented the story of destruction and rebirth conveyed in Hadassah publicity materials.

“Ask...Hannah,” brochure, Box 12, Folder: Presidents and Chairmen Circulates, 1946, Oct – Dec, OFPA/Hadassah. Courtesy of Hadassah Archives.

Told from the first person point of view, the story was accompanied by two pictures — one of Hannah in a hospital bed (Figure 9) and one of her healthy and smiling with a flower (Figure 10) — that, by themselves, conveyed the story Hadassah wished to tell; a story that went from despair and desperation to rebirth. As such, Hannah’s story began, “I remember, I was nine when the Germans came with guns and tanks.” She recalled living in a ghetto with her family for about a year after the German invasion. Then, the story described Hannah being taken to an open grave, where she was forced to take off her clothes and somehow survived a mass shooting. The brochure then stated, “I was covered with dead people. When they [the shooters] left I realized I was still living. I crawled over my daddy’s body. I didn’t even kiss him. I went up the sides and

⁹⁴ Ibid.

ran away.”⁹⁵ After running away from the mass grave, Hannah roamed from village to village until she was caught by police who took her into a forest and intentionally allowed her to run away. Eventually, a Czech family took her in until she heard about children going to Palestine and joined up with them.

The end of the brochure switched perspectives and addressed Hannah directly, assuring her that Youth Aliyah will “be brother and sister, mother and father to you.” Still speaking to Hannah, the brochure appealed to generous American donors by saying, “We give your story to the great American public, certain that many will want to make \$360 a year available to Hadassah to help regenerate and strengthen you, and the tens of thousands of others like you who still await salvation.”⁹⁶ Through this publicity, Hannah became representative of all the 20,000 children brought to Palestine by Youth Aliyah and those still “await[ing] salvation.”

While Hannah’s story may have been representative of thousands of other Youth Aliyah children who found safety in Palestine, Hannah was not actually the 20,000th child. Her representation was in fact a misrepresentation employed for publicity purposes. A letter from August 29, 1946 sent from Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky, co-chairman of Youth Aliyah, to Mrs. Eva Michaelis, Publicity Director in Palestine, stated, “We understand that the material for publicity on the 20,000th child did not actually refer to that specific child, as at the time you sent it to us the child had not yet reached Palestine.”⁹⁷ This is not to say that Hannah’s story did not reflect the experiences of a girl named Hannah or that they were fabricated for publicity purposes; but

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Letter from Mrs. Siegfried Kramarsky to Mrs. Eva Michaelis, August 29, 1946, Box 17, Folder 118, YAP/Hadassah.

the relationship between the survivor who lived through this experience, her voice, and the telling of her story was not straightforward. For Hadassah, the power of the story was not connected to the actual survivor, but to the story on its own – disassociated from the person who lived it.

Nonetheless, Hannah’s image and story were employed to celebrate the arrival of the 20,000th Youth Aliyah child in Palestine and became central to the 1947 fundraising campaign.⁹⁸ Through multiple media forms, Hadassah leaders intended for Hannah’s story to reach a diverse audience and work to spread awareness of Youth Aliyah’s mission while also raising funds to support ongoing work.⁹⁹ Unlike *Displaced*, *Case History #20,000* was not produced by Hadassah and then distributed. Rather, the script was created at the national office and sent throughout the country to be performed locally on radio stations.

The script follows the same story as the brochure, but in order to create a radio drama, the story needed narrative framing. Whereas the brochure featured Hannah’s story in first person, without any dialogue, the adaptation set the drama in the office of a Youth Aliyah worker who asked Hannah a series of informational questions and as Hannah responded to them, her story was revealed. Like *Displaced*, this narrative construction presented Hannah’s story through an interview dependent on a listener. Hannah’s interview, as presented in *Case History #20,000*,

⁹⁸ The brochure and adopted radio script were both distributed to local chapters, although local groups were asked to purchase as many copies as they would need for their local campaigns. The brochures were 35¢ for 100 copies and “they were designed to fit any ordinary business envelope, so there should be no problem mailing them.” Cover letter attached to “Ask...Hannah,” Box 12, Folder: Presidents and Chairmen Circulates, 1946, Oct – Dec, OFPA/Hadassah.

⁹⁹ The cover letter with the script explained that the radio program should be tied to all possible media, including “newspapers, membership mailings, contacts, bulletin boards, telephone squads, and more.” *Case History #20,000* Script, 1, Box 12, Folder: Radio Starter Kits, 1947, OFPA/Hadassah.

depicted the organizational settings where many survivors would have shared their stories in the post-war period.

In *Case History #20,000*, the character of the interviewer also served to break up and disrupt Hannah's account. Hannah, the character, narrated her experience being taken from the ghetto to the mass grave and being forced to take her clothes off. Then, when Hannah came to the part of her story where she found herself lying among dead bodies, the aid worker character interrupted to say, "Yes?" and Hannah responded simply, "Well, I was the only one who escaped."¹⁰⁰ The interviewer then asked, "How did you escape, Hannah?" The intensity of her crawling over bodies, of recognizing her father was edited out as Hannah answered, "I went up the sides and ran away." The story is otherwise the same, employing the same language and ending with the same assertion that "Youth Aliyah will be brother and sister, and father and mother to you."¹⁰¹ With this ending, Hadassah offered Hannah a home in Palestine, arcing her story towards home and the future. Yet, the edit significantly minimized the horror of Hannah's experience and diminished the horror for a broader American audience. Like the stories of children that were edited by the WJC Child Care Division and Rescue Children, Hannah's story was softened for a wide audience.

The other main difference between the script and the pamphlet was the request for financial support. The print brochure asked directly for \$360/year, but the radio script ended with only a suggestion that listeners seek more information and the script had a blank space for the local radio chair to fill in contact information. This local detail was meant to follow a description of the entire campaign: "Hadassah is now engaged in a nationwide campaign to raise \$1,400,000

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

for Youth Aliyah.”¹⁰² This difference reflected radio’s reach to both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences. The print brochure was sent directly to members, former donors, or people who requested more information. In this way, it was a final appeal, meant to inspire immediate action. The radio drama, on the other hand, was intended to engage a wide audience, hoping to inspire the interest of a listener who could then contact the local representative for more information.

The blank space in the script underscored the local intentions for *Case History #20,000*. The production was meant to be used for regional purposes and may not have been recorded at all. Local chapters were asked to approach their local radio stations for airtime and the script performed live. The script was thus accompanied by performance notes such as “the story of Hannah is dramatic enough in its own words, the action should be underplayed rather than overplayed” and instructions on how to recruit actors, including the necessity of finding a “talented child, preferably working with a dramatic group.”¹⁰³

Scripts like *Case History #20,000* gave local leaders the power and responsibility to make the drama most compelling to their community.¹⁰⁴ They found local actors to perform in the dramas and relied on the local radio announcer to be part of the performance so that the voices were not national celebrities, but would have been familiar voices in their community. Such local casting would have altered the accents of survivor voices, further dissipating the idea of a

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Cover Letter, *Case History #20,000* script, Box 12, Folder: Radio Starter Kits, 1947, OFPA/Hadassah.

¹⁰⁴ The cover letter for the “starter” radio manual for Hadassah Radio Chairmen instructed, “Try, too, to work in our scripts, cutting them if necessary, into the programs of regular broadcasters who run daily or weekly shows. “Hadassah on the Air,” March 5, 1947, Box 12, Folder: Radio Starter Kits, 1947, OFPA/Hadassah. Monthly bulletins also included program ideas, but the annual manual was sent with instructions and lists of responsibilities when new chairwomen assumed local roles. “Presidents and Chairmen Circulates, 1946, June – Sept,” “Presidents and Chairmen Circulates, 1946, Oct – Dec,” “Radio Starter Kits, 1947,” and “Presidents and Chairmen Circulated press kits, 1948,” Box 12, Folders: Presidents and Chairmen Press Kits, 1946-1947, OFPA/Hadassah.

survivor voice. The young “talented child” that played Hannah would have had a local accent, regionalizing the character. For *Case History #20,000*, the local radio announcer played a key role introducing Hannah as a young girl with “a concentration camp number branded into her skin in bright blue numerals.”¹⁰⁵ Again, a tattoo became a symbol of the Holocaust that communicated an experience not detailed in the story. The power of the tattoo is particularly interesting in this story about a young girl who escaped a mass shooting and hid in the woods in Eastern Europe. Since she was never in a concentration camp, it was unlikely that she would have had a tattoo at all.

Conclusion

In the last thirty years, along with the growth of survivor culture in America, scholars have theorized the way audio mediums “disembody” survivor voices. Langer has strongly argued that video testimony is the primary mode of memory making because the visual elements capture meaning that is lost in written or oral forms of testimony.¹⁰⁶ Geoffrey Hartman has similarly asserted the primacy of video, declaring that removing the voice from the visualization of the speaker diminishes the “immediacy and evidentiality” of the account. Further, he noted, “The ‘embodiment’ of the survivors, their gestures and bearing, is part of the testimony. It adds significantly to the expressive dimension.”¹⁰⁷ James Young similarly stated that audio accounts

¹⁰⁵ *Case History #20,000* script.

¹⁰⁶ Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* 19-21.

¹⁰⁷ Geoffrey Hartman, *The Longest Shadow: In the Aftermath of the Holocaust*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996) 144.

without visual components weaken testimony because “the speaker in audio tends to be displaced from the words themselves.”¹⁰⁸

Alan Rosen, on the other hand, contends that audio technology offers unique value to Holocaust testimony and, in his study of Boder, wrote that Boder felt that the audio would “embody” the experiences of his interviewees better than moving picture at the time.¹⁰⁹ In fact, Boder thought film technology in the late 1940s was too rehearsed, too boring, too difficult to store, and too short.¹¹⁰ In defending the audio as a valuable medium without any visual component, Rosen cites Joan Ringelheim, former director of the USHMM Oral History Department, as saying that interviews recorded only on audio have “a greater intimacy to the conversation than is typically developed in the video interview.”¹¹¹

Despite this possibility for audio recordings, scholars engaged in the debate about the primacy of medium for survivor testimony tend to favor the visual, declaring video technology to be ideal for preserving Holocaust memory. Yet, how does this reflect back on early accounts like *Displaced* and *Case History #20,000*? It is essential to recognize that the radio programs explored in this chapter were not testimonies in the way Langer, Hartman, Young and Rosen would define them. They were not collected in a systematized way or organized to stand as witness to the Jewish destruction under Nazism. Rather, the narratives considered here were created for radio, designed for consumption and entertainment, not historical preservation. Yet,

¹⁰⁸ Young, *Writing and Rewriting the Holocaust*, 169.

¹⁰⁹ Rosen, *Wonder of their Voices*, 150.

¹¹⁰ Letter to National Defense Research Committee, June 19, 1945, Box 1, Section 1, DPB/UCLA.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Rosen, *Wonder of their Voices*, 150.

they suggest an additional way in which audio media disembodied the survivor voice from the survivor.

In fact, *Displaced* and *Case History #20,000* reveal that the use of radio technology and popular radio genres from the time fractured the link between the survivor and their voice by employing an entirely different person to perform the survivor experience. In debates about survivor testimony the survivor's voice and authenticity as a witness are dependent upon the survivor's relationship to his or her own story and their ability to tell it through their own voice and body language preserved on video.¹¹² As transmitted on American broadcast radio, a survivor's voice was not intricately tied to his or her story or to their own experience and the performers had no relationship to the experience they enacted. *Case History #20,000* further fractured the link between a survivor and their voice by asking many actors to perform as Hannah across the country. As such, Hannah's voice was reimagined in each town in which it was performed. Without offering Hannah a last name, her story was fully disassociated from the young girl who lived through the performed experiences.

In many ways, the conceptions of survivor voice that permeate how testimony collections have been viewed since the 1980s do not speak to these early voiced narratives. Yet, later ideas about testimony and voice offer a lens through which to think about how the medium of radio and the available audio technologies of the day presented a disembodied yet representative survivor to the American listening audience. The theoretical concerns also serve as a reminder that the authenticity and value of Holocaust testimony were not subject to the same kinds of critique in the immediate aftermath of the war as they are today. Rather, the stories of survivors

¹¹² Shoshana Felman, "The Return of the Voice: Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah*," in *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*, ed. Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, MD, (London: Routledge, 1992) 204 – 283. Hartman, *The Longest Shadow*, 144-145. Langer, *Holocaust Testimonies* 27.

in the postwar period these accounts were powerful in their own right – not representing historical truth or memory, but justifying American aid for the ongoing refugee crisis and inspiring help for those who had lived through Nazi atrocity.

Recognizing the different expectations and understanding of survivor voices not only challenges ideas about witnessing that have cemented around collections of survivor video testimonies today, but also makes clear the uniqueness of radio in portraying a voiced survivor. Employing actors and celebrities to dramatize experiences of the Holocaust and using sound effects to heighten the drama were common practice for broadcast radio and organizations followed these successful methods of the medium to best appeal to a radio audience. The same was true for integrating American tropes into survivor accounts – making DPs part of the long history of American immigration was part of a strategy to sway Americans fearful of immigrants.

As such, the ability of the broadcast radio medium to reach diverse listener groups defined how organizations focused on aiding DPs, whether in Europe, America or Palestine and Israel, chose to shape their survivor accounts and how American audiences first heard survivors. Construction of an early survivor voice for this consumer medium represented survivors quite differently than Boder's interviews or later testimony collections that were organized for historical and memorial purposes. Rather than create a survivor voice that was authenticated by its relationship to the body of a survivor and that represented one survivor's unique experience, survivor voices on early radio accounts multiplied and fractured the idea of a survivor.

Conclusion

Towards a longer history of American Holocaust memory?

By 1953, survivors were, for the most part, no longer DPs or refugees and the multiplicity of survivor identities that proliferated during the postwar period was, to a great extent, resolved. U.S. administration of the DP camps had ended and the majority of Jewish survivors had been resettled.¹ Survivors who emigrated to America had started to adapt to American life and a new story of survivors emerged, one that ended neatly in new homes and tidied up the messiness of the DP period. It is this story that entered into American pop-culture on May 27, 1953 when Hanna Bloch Kohner became the first Holocaust survivor on TV as the featured guest on *This is Your Life*.² Just as broadcast radio allowed survivor voices to reach a broad American audience, network television depicted survivors as embodied individuals for millions of viewers and Kohner became the first survivor to tell her story in this medium.

At the time, *This is your Life* was one of the most popular shows on TV with an average viewership of 9,412,000. Kohner was young, pretty, and, according to host, Ralph Edwards, “looked more like an American college co-ed than a survivor of Nazi death camps.”³

Additionally, Kohner spoke excellent, almost accent-less English and her husband, a

¹ Föhrenwald DP camp remained open until 1957 after it passed from U.S. to German administration in December 1951. Those who remained in camps after 1952 were known as the Hard Core, many of whom could not leave Germany for a variety of reasons. Most eventually settled in Germany. Michael Brenner, *After the Holocaust: Rebuilding Jewish Lives in Postwar Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 41.

² *This is Your Life*, Hanna Bloch Kohner, May 27, 1953. UCLA Film and Television Archive, DVD7453T. The show is also available on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/v/m3F9Rc6i_-w. Jeffrey Shandler details this episode in *While America Watches*. Jeffrey Shandler, *While America Watches Televising the Holocaust*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 30 – 37.

³ *This is Your Life*, Hanna Bloch Kohner.

Czechoslovakian Jew by birth, had served in the U.S. Army during the war, all of which made her an ideal, but atypical, representative of survivors on American TV. Hanna's story was depicted as all other stories on *This is Your Life*: significant people in her life waited off stage and surprised her as Edwards narrated each turn in her journey. For Hanna, Edwards described her refuge in Amsterdam after Czechoslovakia was invaded by Nazi Germany, followed by her deportation to Westerbork, Theresienstadt, Auschwitz, and Mathausen.⁴ Throughout the show, Hanna was reunited with other survivors, including her friend Eva, and her brother, whom she had not seen in a decade.

Through the show's format, Hanna's story was transformed, as Jeffrey Shandler suggests, from one "of rupture, loss and displacement...into a cohesive narrative of triumph over adversity."⁵ And yet, Hanna's interaction with Edwards and her surprise guests complicate the composed nature of the show's template. Verbally, Hanna responded with joy as Edwards detailed her grim experiences under Nazism, repeatedly exclaiming, "Oh, isn't this wonderful" as she was reunited with friends. Her brother also seemed to be celebrating the tragedy when, upon being reunited with Hanna, he exclaimed, "This is the happiest day in all my life." However, Hanna's facial expressions betray her sense of loss and the darkness of the memories conjured by her life story. She repeatedly covers her face with her hands to shield tears and discomfort. When her brother is brought on stage, she hugs him so tightly and for so long, that he has to coax her to sit back down and rejoin the show. The layers of memory and performance appear at odds with the neatly packaged narrative that defined her experience for the viewing audience. At the end of

⁴ For more about Hanna's story and the transatlantic love story between Hanna and her husband, Walter, see their memoir: Hanna Kohner, Walter Kohner, and Frederick Kohner, *Hanna and Walter: A Love Story*, (New York: Random House, 1984).

⁵ Shandler, *While America Watches*, 36.

the episode, Edwards summarized Hanna's experience, declaring, "The never to be forgotten tragic experiences of your life, Hanna, have been tempered by the happiness you've found here in America."⁶ Then, Edwards announced that viewers should donate to UJA to help other people like Hanna and that Hazel Bishop, the show's sponsor, would be the first to donate, sending \$1,000 to UJA in her name.⁷

That Hanna's Holocaust story should be told as one of haven in America was not unusual for the postwar period and echoes many of the stories detailed in this study. In fact, Hanna's episode reflects many of the themes explored in the previous chapters of this dissertation, including the centrality of immigration in telling Holocaust narratives, the role of fundraising in depicting survivors for American audiences, and the spirit of optimism and triumph that marked so many postwar stories. Each of these narrative strategies defined how Americans Jews were first introduced to stories about the experiences of Holocaust survivors and, as such, the transformation of Hanna's story into the *This is Your Life* model was not outside accepted norms at the time. That her story should be told on national television, however, was unusual, and offers a significant challenge to scholars who assert that America did not confront the Holocaust in the postwar period and to a broader audience who have accepted the received knowledge about postwar silence.

Yet, a contemporary reading of the episode elicits a skeptical reaction. On March 4, 2011, the popular radio show *This American Life* aired an episode titled "Oh, you shouldn't have"

⁶ *This is Your Life*, Hanna Bloch Kohner.

⁷ Hazel Bishop was a makeup company and in addition to giving Hanna a charm bracelet that marked her life experiences, they also gave her a jeweled lipstick case as a souvenir for being on the show. *This is Your Life*, Hanna Bloch Kohner. For more about the fundraising component of this episode, see Shandler, *While America Watches*, 35 - 36.

which featured four stories about problematic gifts and the show's first act featured reporter Allison Silverman's assessment of Kohner's experience on *This is Your Life*.⁸ Silverman is particularly judgmental of the shift in Edward's narrative from recounting the danger of showers with liquid gas to a celebration of Hanna's life in America, although she notes that, "Calling anyone a patriot in front of 40 million Americans is nice. Calling a Jewish immigrant from Czechoslovakia, a Communist country, a patriot is more than nice." Silverman's point is that in May 1953, a month before the execution of the Rosenbergs, being identified as American was a powerful statement of acceptance, especially for a Jewish immigrant. In this way, Silverman recognized the overlapping narratives of the Holocaust and the Cold War, an important historical marker that identified Jewish survivors as warriors for peace in battles for immigration reform and humanitarian aid. But, she overlooked the cultural norms of the postwar world that would demand this kind of narrative structure and welcome its celebratory tone. Instead, Silverman wields her sarcasm for the gifts Kohner received as a participant on the show, including a copy of the episode, a projector, a mirrored lipstick case, and a 14-k gold charm bracelet, about which Silverman joked, "It's the kind of Holocaust charm bracelet you pass down to your kids."⁹ Despite her reaction to the Holocaust charm bracelet, Silverman acknowledges that Edwards used the show to help people and that at the time "there were just no rules for how" to tell the story of a Holocaust survivor.

⁸ "Oh, you shouldn't have," March 4, 2011, *This American Life*, Audio and Transcript available at <http://www.thisamericanlife.org/radio-archives/episode/428/transcript>.

⁹ In fact, Kohner's daughter, Julie Kohner, remembers happily watching the episode on holidays with her parents and uses the bracelet and a book based on her mother's experience to teach about the Holocaust across the country. Her foundation, Voices of the Generations, has developed curricular materials related to Hanna and Walter's stories: <http://vogcharity.org/>.

In many ways, Silverman is right: in the immediate postwar period there were no rules for how to tell the story of a Holocaust survivor and there were equally no rules for telling the story of the Holocaust. She is also right when she asserts that the term “Holocaust” was years away from standardized use. Yet, I include Silverman’s reaction to the 1953 episode here because her tone exposes a contemporary expectation about how Holocaust survivor narratives should be told and what kind of tone should be used to tell them (reverential as opposed to celebratory). Silverman is audibly offended by the way Edwards chose to tell Hanna’s story and her report takes for granted that a 2011 audience would hear the “wholesome all-American spirit” and “game show tactics” of *This is Your Life* as an inappropriate form for talking about the Holocaust.¹⁰ Her indignation serves as a reminder to recognize the specific context of postwar memory at the same time that it invites questions about a longer history of Holocaust memory construction. These overlapping concerns return us to the initial questions of the study: first, how did American Jewish philanthropy in the postwar period inform American Jews about the Holocaust and define early survivor representations; and, second, what is the relationship between these early survivor accounts and the way we understand and engage with survivor testimony today?

Hanna’s episode of *This is Your Life* marks a significant transition for Holocaust survivor representation in America. Survivors were no longer depicted as helpless figures wrapped in rags; they were beautiful, vivacious young women with comfortable American lives. Although UJA had referred to survivors as New Americans from the beginning of the postwar period,

¹⁰ In referring to some forms of Holocaust representation as inappropriate, I rely on the discussion documented in Saul Friedländer, *Probing the Limits of Representation: Nazism and the "Final Solution,"* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1992).

depicting the resilience and strength of survivors that could one day become citizens, by 1953, those survivors had become Americans and Hanna's story aptly represented a cohesive narrative arc from tragedy to hope. The needs of the postwar period no longer defined the content of survivor narratives and the future seemed assured in America. It was as though the promise of liberation, a promise failed in so many postwar narratives, was resolved by 1953 and the survivors who were "working towards the future to blot out the past" had found that future.¹¹

As such, Hanna's episode marks the end of the immediate postwar moment for this study, even as the appeal for UJA serves as a reminder that American Jewish humanitarian intervention abroad did not end, nor did the relationship between American Jewish communal activity and representations of Holocaust survivors. Nonetheless, the end of the DP crisis, alleviated by the creation of the State of Israel and the subsequent reduction in immigration pressure, changed the nature of American Jewish fundraising efforts. As survivors found new homelands and adjusted to life in Israel or America, the uncertainty and indeterminacy of postwar survivor narratives was resolved and the liminality of the postwar period lost its potency in fundraising appeals. Narratives about the Holocaust could find resolution, as Hanna's joy in America demonstrates, and, as a result, liberation could become a definitive marker that signaled the end of Jewish persecution.

Yet, during the first few postwar years, it is exactly this liminal moment and the spaces and struggles of the DP experience that most powerfully motivated American Jewish action. Communal organizations became the central mediators in this period, translating the reality of postwar Europe for American Jews in order to tug at their heart and purse strings. This was not

¹¹ *The Future Can be Theirs*, USHMM.

an empty goal; Jews in Europe faced unprecedented challenges as they emerged from concentration camps or came out of hiding, searched for family members, and tried to rebuild their lives. Stories constructed for fundraising appeals thus defined early Holocaust narratives as DP stories, depicting life in DP camps and the continued violence and insecurity of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. American Jews responded to these stories in extraordinary ways, raising ever more money throughout the postwar period, engaging in volunteer efforts like clothing collection and letter writing, and advocating for immigration possibilities in Palestine and America.

Nonetheless, competing visions for a Jewish future fractured a cohesive representation of survivors for American audiences as Jewish organizations across the political, cultural, and religious landscape defined different priorities for postwar aid. Zionist organizations like Hadassah and UPA focused on the need for a Jewish state as the only way to secure a Jewish future. JDC, WJC, and NCJW provided aid in Europe and sought to rehabilitate Jewish life around the world. USNA and HIAS worked with Jewish immigrants in the U.S. and fought for more lenient immigration quotas to America. The diversity of these philanthropic and political ambitions in addition to power struggles within and between organizations, challenged a unified American Jewish response to the Holocaust and multiplied survivor representations. As a result, survivors were not only depicted as DPs and refugees, but also transformed into Pilgrims, Pioneers, and New Americans, identities that reflected a range of postwar possibilities and competing ideological priorities.

Despite these differences, narratives about the Holocaust constructed by American Jewish communal organizations all employed American themes and motifs to translate the stories of survivors for American audiences. Like Hanna Kohner's story, survivor narratives arced towards joy and resettlement, turning away from the dark towards the light. Specific

postwar values, like the centrality of children in nuclear families, the celebration of diversity, and a return to consumerism, were also integrated into Holocaust narratives. The transformation of DPs into Delayed Pilgrims most explicitly established American motifs as central components of early Holocaust narratives and conveyed the political underpinnings of such narrative construction. By referring to Jewish survivors as pilgrims, organizations concerned with immigration reform in America inserted DPs into a long history of American immigration and evoked America's founding myth as a haven from religious oppression to influence postwar debate. The spirit of Thanksgiving thus defined survivors through American myths and represented America as a symbol of hope, a site of opportunity, and the bearer of freedom.

In each of these narrative frames and for each possible Jewish future, American Jews defined themselves as saviors, responsible not only for saving Jewish lives, but preserving a Jewish future. As a result, the early Holocaust narratives constructed to motivate American Jewish aid abroad told reciprocal stories about American Jewry that defined its new position in the postwar Jewish world. In the aftermath of the Holocaust, American Jewish communal organizations told stories that connected American Jews with European Jews and, in so doing, crafted Holocaust narratives that reflected, demanded, and celebrated American Jewish action abroad.

So, how can we understand the transformation of survivor narratives and our expectations about those narratives between the immediate postwar period and today? Does this close examination of early postwar survivor narratives offer a new starting point for understanding a continuous development of postwar Holocaust memory? Or, on the contrary, does this study

point to a gap between the burst of expression in the immediate postwar period and then a later return to Holocaust memory that forgot its earlier incarnation? Although these early narratives anticipate many of the later themes that define Holocaust testimony, there is not a straight line that connects the two and that the “Myth of Silence” reveals the difference between these two moments of memory construction more than a period of silence. As Hasia Diner has argued, early efforts at Holocaust commemoration may have been overlooked because they didn’t look like later attempts.¹² So, too, these narratives have been perceived as absent because they did not fit the mold of survivor memory that has come to be revered.

David Boder’s work is a prime example of how a perception of memory being lost and found is now being asserted. Boder’s work, largely overlooked even in his own time period, was then buried in archives and libraries around the country. In 1998, given the expansion of Holocaust testimony creation in America, Donald Niewyk published a heavily edited collection of Boder’s testimonies.¹³ Niewyk’s edits repositioned Boder’s work to better fit into contemporary expectations of survivor narratives, removing any inconsistencies, lapses in chronology, and Boder’s own voice. In the same year, the Illinois Institute of Technology discovered lost wire recordings from Boder’s collection and began digitizing his early oral histories. In 2000, the Voices of the Holocaust website was first launched and by 2009, 118 interviews had been translated, transcribed, digitized and made available on the site.¹⁴

¹² Diner writes, “Because the memorial works of the postwar period differed from those of later decades does not mean that they did not exist.” Hasia R. Diner, *We Remember with Reverence and Love: American Jews and the Myth of Silence After the Holocaust, 1945-1962*, (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 17.

¹³ Donald L. Niewyk, *Fresh Wounds: Early Narratives of Holocaust Survival*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

¹⁴ Voices of the Holocaust Project: <http://voices.iit.edu/>; Alan Rosen’s 2010 study of Boder’s work is the book end of this renewed attention. Alan Rosen, *The wonder of their voices: the 1946 Holocaust interviews of David Boder* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

The digitization of Boder's project gives the lost-and-found narrative larger ramifications. Boder's testimonies have not only been reexamined by scholars, but they have been preserved and made openly available online for a wide audience now committed to survivor memory as a privileged source of Holocaust knowledge. In some ways, this fulfills Boder's initial hopes for his project. But, what would he have made of an open online repository of his oral history interviews? We can look to the USC Shoah Foundation to see how some of the ethical issues at stake in making survivor testimonies available online have played out. Thus far, the foundation has made 1000 testimonies available online through YouTube.¹⁵ This subset of the 52,000 recorded testimonies represents a middle ground in the demand for public access to these narratives and points to a tension between the responsibility of protecting survivor memories and cultivating a public culture of Holocaust engagement. These digital repositories of Holocaust memory reformat both early and later testimonies, recontextualizing the audio and audio-visual survivor narratives in an online space. As such, the new digital sources flatten the historical particularities that defined the construction of memory in both cases. How this new space changes the way American (and international) audiences hear, see, and understand these survivor accounts is still an open question.

Recognizing the similarities and differences between survivor accounts from the 1940s and 50s and the 1980s and 90s might help us confront the ways these new technologies and listening practices will again re-shape Holocaust memory in the digital age. To start, the agency of survivors to tell their own stories drastically altered the way testimony was collected, preserved, and disseminated. By the 1970s and 80s, survivors were no longer DPs, or refugees,

¹⁵ USC Shoah Foundation YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/USCShoahFoundation/featured>.

or even New Americans; they were citizens of America, Israel, Australia, or wherever they had chosen to settle. They knew the language and could communicate their stories through their own words to their intended audiences. In the immediate postwar period, most of the narratives constructed by Jewish organizations were done so without the input (or knowledge, in many cases) of the survivors in Europe. The nature of that kind of narrative construction may help us address the challenge of transmitting Holocaust memory for future generations who will not interact with survivors.

Additionally, the digital world opens up the way individual listeners and viewers can see and hear survivor narratives. Unlike the 1990s, when institutions could limit access to the memory they had created and construct specific points of entry, the digital world blows past these barriers. Anyone can now view the available materials from any place in the world; they can start and stop the video testimonies at any point and link from any site on the Internet. The USC Shoah Foundation has embraced this idea to some extent, creating a new format, iWitness, which allows students to edit testimonies to create short films.¹⁶ This kind of interactivity and public facing engagement is contrary to the ideals of memory articulated in the 1990s and, yet, reminiscent of the open and diffuse narratives made public in the postwar period.

With these possible connections in mind, the perceived narrative of memory lost and found deserves reexamination and perhaps a next chapter of this study would expand the timeline to consider how the philanthropic appeals of organized American Jewish groups continued to reposition and realign the symbols of the Holocaust into the present day. Even without such an expansive timeline, this study reveals that through a variety of media and a multiplicity of narrative strategies, American Jewish communal organizations took seriously their role in

¹⁶ http://sfi.usc.edu/teach_and_learn/iwitness.

organizing a response to the Holocaust and employed narratives about survivors to motivate philanthropic, political, and financial action from American Jews. The narratives constructed for and through the diverse projects of American Jewish communal life defined survivors through both American and Jewish motifs and reflected a postwar understanding of American Jews as saviors of Jewish lives and leaders of world Jewry.

As we continue to respond to the humanitarian challenges that face the world today and employ narratives that fulfill diverse political and philanthropic ambitions, we are forced to contemplate how we craft stories that define American engagement with historical events. I return to Alison Silverman's indignation upon watching Hanna Bloch Kohner on *This is Your Life* and wonder how our own constructions of memory will be judged by scholars and journalists in the next generation. Will our assessments of climate change seem provincial and our narratives about the Arab Spring too optimistic? What American motifs do we continue to employ as we look around the world and try to render it understandable? By expanding our understanding of what it means to know the Holocaust and our consideration of multiple forms of Holocaust survivor accounts, perhaps we can also increase our awareness of the messy, diffuse, and contested nature of memory construction in the immediate aftermath of each new tragedy we confront.

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