## Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal

Volume 5 | Issue 1 Article 1

2024

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#### **Recommended Citation**

Brown, Nathanael D. (2024) "Swastikas at Swat and Student Holocaust Memorial Culture," Swarthmore Undergraduate History Journal: 5 (1), 7-22. 10.24968/2693-244X.5.1.1 https://works.swarthmore.edu/ suhj/vol5/iss1/1

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# Swastikas at Swat and Student Holocaust Memorial Culture

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**Abstract:** A series of antisemitic incidents on the campus of Swarthmore College in 2016 invoked a larger memory culture of the Holocaust for Jewish students. This phenomenon was not an aberration, but rather the product of a well-documented effort by Jewish organizations to create a Holocaust memorial culture that would leave a lasting impact on those who experienced it, especially students. By researching the larger picture of how Holocaust Memory culture was created, and using that and Maurice Halbwachs's "lieu de mémoire" method of historiography as frameworks, we gain insight into how some Jewish students' perceptions of antisemitism in 2016 were shaped by Holocaust memory culture.

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On August 30th, 2016, several students found a spray-painted swastika in a bathroom in the McCabe Library of Swarthmore College. What followed this incident were several months of repeated antisemitic graffiti across Swarthmore College's campus. Responses to this incident were immediate, with the first response in Swarthmore College's campus newspaper *The Phoenix* being written by William Meyer, vice president of Swarthmore College's Jewish student organization, Kehilah. Almost immediately, this incident and the responses to it brought to mind the painful memory of antisemitism and genocide to the college's Jewish community. In his op-ed for *The Phoenix*, Meyer commented on the depressing numbness he felt to see the symbols of the regime that killed his great-grandfather and other members of his family spray painted in his campus library. The swastika painted in the library served as a painful "lieu de mémoire," a site of memory that has "become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community." In this case, the specific recollection is of a familial and/or collective memory of the Holocaust. The response of recollection also acts as a site of memory.

Meyer was not alone in recalling family memories of the Holocaust, for other members of Swarthmore's Jewish community, recent incidents of antisemitic hate speech on Swarthmore College's campus evoked personal memories of antisemitism as well as familial and collective memories of the Holocaust. The individuals thus engaged in both collective and personal remembrances of these incidents and used this memory as a way to interpret the current political climate surrounding First Amendment rights and hate speech. Through examination of sources created at the time and an oral history interview with a board member of Kehilah, I will explore

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> William Meyer, "A Response to Yesterday's Anti-Semitic Hate Crime," *The Phoenix*, September 1, 2016, https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/01/37672/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvii.

what specific memories were evoked, what they tell us about the memories of the Holocaust held by these students, and what those memories signify for these individuals in larger political culture.

This memory was significant for William Meyer because it influenced how he understood the political climate of 2016. In his article for *The Phoenix*, Meyer began with a history of the symbol in Nazi Germany and then proceeded into a discussion of the rising tide of acceptance of antisemitism in the US that he and other Jewish students saw. Meyer drew a direct link between the normalization of antisemitism in 1930s Germany through graffiti on Jewish shops— which led to the German population's acquiescence to Nazi policies of genocide— and the rising acceptance of antisemitism in the US and abroad today. In his article, Meyer discusses how, due to Jews being "...disproportionately represented in fields of law, finance, and medicine," their attempts to draw attention to their plight were dismissed as "whining."

This memory was not just passed down through his education in history classes, it was supplemented by Holocaust memory culture in the United States, originating from institutions such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The establishment of museums such as the USHMM, which opened in 2005, provided American teenagers with access to the new culture of memories emerging from such sites.<sup>4</sup> Memorials and museums like this act as a vehicle of memory, a "…representation of the past and the making of it into a shared cultural knowledge…" This method of memory production is especially prescient for Jews in regards to the preservation of and remembrance of their shared history. In an article for *The New Yorker*,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> William Meyer, "A Response to Yesterday's Anti-Semitic Hate Crime," *The Phoenix*, September 1, 2016, https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/01/37672/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> "Mission and History — United States Holocaust Memorial Museum," accessed May 2, 2023, https://www.ushmm.org/information/about-the-museum/mission-and-history.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Alon Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method," *The American Historical Review* 102, no. 5 (1997): 1386–1403, https://doi.org/10.2307/2171069. 1386.

"Why Jewish history is so hard to write," Jewish writer Adam Hirsch says of Judaism, "...it is possible to see Judaism itself as a technology of memory, a set of practices designed to make the past present." The title of Meyer's article reflects this: "A Response to Yesterday's Anti-Semitic Hate Crime from a "Whiny Brat Jew" Meyer was drawing a direct link between the remembered, lived experience of his recent ancestors and the current events he was experiencing. By remembering his ancestors as being accused of "whining" in the face of antisemitic persecution and then placing himself in the same category of "whining Jew," Meyer is demonstrating an understanding of his circumstances of experiencing antisemitism that directly originates from his memories of his ancestors.

Meyer also references memories of this direct experience during his time at Swarthmore. One example is facing antisemitic comments on Yik-Yak, an anonymous social media platform localized to college campuses. Two antisemitic comments he recalls in his op-ed are a post asserting that "Jews should view their ethnic heritage as akin to being "descended from a Confederate officer" and that "anti-Semitism itself is a conspiracy invented by the Rothschild banking family to let Jews oppress people of color." These two comments reflect antipathy towards Jews and the dismissal of antisemitism. Myers connects these recent personal memories of the dismissal of the existence of antisemitism to the dismissal of antisemitism that his recent ancestors experienced.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Adam Kirsch, "Why Jewish History Is So Hard to Write," *The New Yorker*, March 19, 2018, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/03/26/why-jewish-history-is-so-hard-to-write.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Popularly the anti-Semitism as written with a dash and capital S refers to discrimination against people of Semitic origin, however, as read literally, it is opposing Semitism, a pseudoscientific term for the orientalizing study of Semitic peoples. As such, I use antisemitism and antisemitic in this paper, however some original quotes contain the popular spelling of the term.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> William Meyer, "A Response to Yesterday's Anti-Semitic Hate Crime," *The Phoenix*, September 1, 2016, <a href="https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/01/37672/">https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/01/37672/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Ibid.

This method of Holocaust remembrance is a common phenomenon experienced by descendants of Holocaust survivor families. In her article "Survivor Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?," Carol A. Kidron explores the phenomenon by which Jewish youth are placed in their ancestors' shoes as part of their cultural education. Trips to Israel, such as those sponsored by organizations like Taglit-Birthright Israel, place a spotlight on individuals with Holocaust survivors or victims in their families.

Kidron explains that students with a familial connection to the Holocaust can have this connection emphasized (or in some cases explained) for the first time before a trip to Israel. This links directly with a phenomenon that the scholar on Jewish tourism to Israel and its political impact, Jackie Feldman, notes in his book *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag: Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity,* whereby students with direct Holocaust-connected ancestry are a crucial part of the memory that many Israeli-funded or -aligned Holocaust education programs tell to students. These students are often singled out and asked to tell their familial story of the Holocaust to the larger group of the students, and through this process become what Kidron calls "technologies of self of the vocal witness in the service of Holocaust memory," <sup>10</sup> Meyer was acting in this exact role both while he recounted the story of his family's connection to the Holocaust when he wrote the op-ed in *The Phoenix*. The students on Swarthmore's campus at this time were primarily born between 1994-1998 and were witness to a massive boom in Holocaust memory culture creation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Jackie Feldman, *Above the Death Pits, Beneath the Flag Youth Voyages to Poland and the Performance of Israeli National Identity* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 60-64.; Carol A. Kidron. "Survivor Family Memory Work at Sites of Holocaust Remembrance: Institutional Enlistment or Family Agency?," *History and Memory* 27, no. 2 (September, 2015) 47.

In 1949, the Ghetto Fighters' House was opened in Akko, Israel. It was the first institution created to record the history of the Holocaust, and its goal was primarily the recollection of history. In 1953, Yad Vashem was founded with the specific goal of being. "The World Center for Holocaust Remembrance." Yad Vashem plays a key role in developing the historical memory of the Holocaust for the hundreds of thousands who visit it every year. Yad Vashem is not a museum, but a "Holocaust Remembrance Center." Its name in Hebrew means "A Memorial and a Name." Throughout the 1950s and 60s various concentration camps became open to the public, as did the Anne Frank House. Beginning in 1993 with the foundation of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Fundación Memoria del Holocausto, there would be a wellspring of new museums and memorials in the United States and abroad. 12 These new sites of memory would create a new Holocaust memory culture for a new generation. Students on Swarthmore's campus at the time would have had access to and been influenced by the new memorials and museums being opened up at this time. In the United States, there are 27 Holocaust museums, education centers, and memorial museums, many of them opened after 1990.<sup>13</sup> As Lacin Idil Oztig writes: "Holocaust museums that are spread all around the world, including the US, Australia, and South Africa, reflect the internationalization of the Holocaust memorial culture." <sup>14</sup> For American college students in 2016, the memory had been readily accessible to them and instrumental in shaping their memory of the Holocaust. While this

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> "Visit Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center," accessed April 21, 2023, https://www.yadvashem.org/visiting.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Chelsey Parrott-Sheffer, "Holocaust Museum | Locations, History, Contents, & Facts | Britannica," April 19, 2023, <a href="https://www.britannica.com/topic/Holocaust-museum">https://www.britannica.com/topic/Holocaust-museum</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> "Holocaust Museums near the Us," Holocaust museums near the us, accessed May 3, 2023, <a href="https://www.google.com/maps/search/holocaust+museums+in+the+us/@.33.0842258,-108.25062">https://www.google.com/maps/search/holocaust+museums+in+the+us/@.33.0842258,-108.25062</a> 15,4z/data=!4m2!2m1!6e1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Lacin Idil Oztig, "Holocaust Museums, Holocaust Memorial Culture, and Individuals: A Constructivist Perspective," *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies* 22, no. 1 (January 2023): 62–83, <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2021.2011607">https://doi.org/10.1080/14725886.2021.2011607</a>.

memory culture was readily available in the United States, it was also growing stronger in Israel, Yad Vashem underwent massive renovations in 2005 opening the New Holocaust History

Museum and the Visual Center. 15

A personal remembrance of the Holocaust, such as personally created memory is the byproduct of conscious design decisions in museums like Yad Vashem and the USHMM. As Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich writes in her book *Holocaust Memory Reframed*, specific design decisions were made in these museums "...in an effort to metaphorically overcome geographic and temporal-and thereby psychological-distance." The goal of these museums is to connect the visitors of these museums to the lived experience of the Jews during the Holocaust regardless of if they have a familial connection. William Meyers' earlier statement that "... many, if not most, of the Jews you meet here [Swarthmore College] had grandparents, great-grandparents, or other family members who were tortured and killed [in the Holocaust]." is erroneous given the well-established American-Jewish community before the Holocaust that many American Jews are descended from. Museums like Yad Vashem and the USHMM focus on connecting these non-Holocaust-descended Jews to the experience of Holocaust victims. At Vad Yeshem, in 2005, the new Holocaust History Museum was opened, Hansen-Glucklich says of its architecture:

The new Holocaust History Museum demonstrates the power of evocative architecture as it creates in its visitors an empathetic, visceral identification with the victims of the Holocaust and inspires a redemptive reading of its narrative.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> "Events 2005 | Yad Vashem. The World Holocaust Remembrance Center," accessed May 3, 2023, https://www.yadvashem.org/about/events/2005.html.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich. *Holocaust Memory Reframed* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> William Meyer, "A Response to Yesterday's Anti-Semitic Hate Crime," *The Phoenix*, September 1, 2016, https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/01/37672/.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup>Jennifer Hansen-Glucklich, *Holocaust Memory Reframed* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2014), 66.

The experience of American Jews visiting these locations and their perceptions would be identification with the victims of the Holocaust regardless of family connection.

The change in memory between Dawass' interview and her remarks in the Phoenix article written at the time represents the largest contrast in memory between the swastika graffiti event and my interviews seven years later. At the time of the event, Dawass expressed dissatisfaction with the response of the college administration and other student groups to the incident. In an interview for a *Phoenix* article titled "How Swarthmore Reacted to McCabe Swastikas," Dawass says: "[Other groups] didn't go out of their way to have conversations about it." This remark combined with what *The Phoenix* terms as "...disappointment that only Kehilah reacted with a dedicated event." indicates displeasure with the response. However, by the time of my interview with Dawass, this perspective had changed and she instead said "I remember being really pleased." This change in memory can be attributed to several factors, most likely that in the ensuing time the perpetrator of the graffiti was found and there was a larger response from the administration after multiple incidents of graffiti occurred.

Another memory that has changed between the time of the event and the present is her memory surrounding Jewish first-year students on campus. First-year students are mentioned in both *The Phoenix* article and in my interview with Dawass. Dawass notes that she remembers new students being very concerned that Swarthmore was not going to be a safe and inclusive environment, given that this incident occurred during their first week on campus. In her interview for *The Phoenix*, Dawass says: "as the conversation [a Kehiliah meeting in Bond Memorial Hall] progressed the first-year appeared to become more comfortable." However, in

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Eduard Saakashvili, "How Swarthmore Reacted to McCabe Swastikas (Includes Photo)," September 6, 2016, <a href="https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/06/37802/">https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/06/37802/</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Simona Dawass, Oral history interview with author, phone call, March 4, 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Eduard Saakashvili, "How Swarthmore Reacted to McCabe Swastikas (Includes Photo)," *The Phoenix*, September 6, 2016, <a href="https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/06/37802/">https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/06/37802/</a>.

her recollection during our interview Dawass says that she does not remember students, "feeling as safe or comfortable in Kehilah," and although some had been active the first week, they became much less involved. These two gaps represent conflicting remembrances, in one case Dawass' recollections are more positive given space and time as reflected by her response that she was pleased with the administration's response. In the other case, Dawass' memory is that of a less positive outcome than the one that she comments on to *The Phoenix*. As readers, we see a student scared away from remaining active in Jewish life on campus rather than one who "feels more comfortable."

Dawass commented that she believed the political culture in the United States caused by the 2016 election was linked to the incidents. She draws a direct connection by making several comments in her interview about the role she thought the 2016 election played in the incident, and through this, we can see how the 2016 incident shaped her perspective of the incident and also how her memory of the Holocaust and antisemitism as evoked by the incident affect her remembrance of the incident. Dawass says of 2016: "I don't know if that discovery, or even like this debris of the swastikas caused any particular friction on campus, or was the start of any particular friction on campus. It was just like a weird time to be living on a college campus, especially a very liberal one. There was like a lot of negativity in the air, always." Dawass follows with a comment about the difficulty in finding a balance that allows free expression while not hurting people. She again references the student who was "scared off" by the graffiti incidents. In doing so, she taps into the larger body of thought on how graffiti like this falls between hate speech and First Amendment rights. Symbols such as the swastika act as powerful sites of memory whereby the memory of their history is evoked by them, as is the nature of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Simona Dawass, Oral history interview with author, phone call, March 4, 2023.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ibid.

symbolic objects. Because the Swastika is so intimately tied with antisemitism as the emblem of a regime whose memory is defined by antisemitism, it can not be seen without evoking that memory.

Another such symbol witnessed at Swarthmore's sister school Bryn Mawr, the Confederate flag, sparked a similar discussion. In 2014 two Bryn Mawr students displayed a Confederate flag in a common room in a dormitory and created a "Mason-Dixon Line" with neon tape through the space. What followed was over a week of protesting and a discussion about diversity and inclusion on campus. The flag evoked this controversy because of the memory of what the flag stands for. As an article published by a student newspaper at the time states, "The flag [the Confederate "Stars and Bars"], which served as a national symbol of the slaveholding South during the Civil War, maintains a strong anti-Black connotation for many."24 While the flag displayed was not the actual national flag of the Confederacy, but rather the "Stars and Bars," the flag adopted by segregationists in the 1940s-60s, it retains the anti-Black connotations of the official flag of the Confederacy for many. Symbols can retain their meaning even when divorced from their original context. Such as the swastika being spray painted by someone of presumably no association with the Third Reich. Swarthmore students and Bryn Mawr students at the time reflect on the feeling of insecurity they felt as the "bubble" of safety and tolerance they felt their campuses to be was violated by this hate. 2526

The debate surrounding hate speech versus freedom of expression in both of these cases serves as examples of instrumental presentism. Presentism is the role the present plays in shaping

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Bobby Zipp, "Bryn Mawr Campus Roiled by Confederate Flag, Mason-Dixon Line in Dormitory," *The Phoenix*, September 25, 2014, <a href="https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2014/09/25/bryn-mawr-campus-roiled-by-confederate-flag-mason-dixon-line-in-dormitory/">https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2014/09/25/bryn-mawr-campus-roiled-by-confederate-flag-mason-dixon-line-in-dormitory/</a>.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Eduard Saakashvili, "How Swarthmore Reacted to McCabe Swastikas (Includes Photo)," *The Phoenix*, September 6, 2016, <a href="https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/06/37802/">https://swarthmorephoenix.com/2016/09/06/37802/</a>.

and understanding historical memory. Presentism emerged because as Maurice Halbwachs puts it "...the past is not preserved but is reconstructed on the basis of the present." History is remembered in the shadow of present events. At the same time, the interpretation of memory is shaped, "constituted by the commandments of our present society." In my interview with Simona Dawass, I saw how the current conversations regarding free speech and public acceptance of antisemitism shaped her memory of the Holocaust and in the reverse how those current events colored the remembrance of the Holocaust. This phenomenon is reflected in the parallels that they draw in both directions, equating the present with the past. This understanding of history, Jewish history, in this case, acts as a way to make the past present.

Instrumental presentism is also a tool used in a lot of historical memory work, such as that done by pro-Israeli education programs. Museums such as Yad Vashem and organizations such as Birthright use the memory of the Holocaust and antisemitism as justification for the policies of the nation of Israel. The website for Yad Vashem has a section titled "Holocaust Survivors and the State of Israel." The picture shows a man in the striped uniform assigned to prisoners in concentration camps holding the flag of Israel. A striking image that creates an immediate association between Holocaust survivors and the existence of Israel as a refuge for them. As James E. Young says in his chapter "The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History" for the book *Cultural Memory Studies*, "Memory of the Holocaust is never shaped in a vacuum, and the motives for such memory are never pure." As recent as 2006, before a planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, Israeli settlers wore orange stars on their sleeves

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory* (University of Chicago Press, 1992). 40.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Ibid. 50.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> "Holocaust Survivors and the State of Israel | Yad Vashem," accessed April 21, 2023, <a href="https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/survivors/index.asp">https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/exhibitions/survivors/index.asp</a>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> "The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials in History," in *Cultural Memory Studies*, vol. 8, Media and Cultural Memory / Medien Und Kulturelle Erinnerung (Germany: De Gruyter, Inc, 2008), <a href="https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.6.357">https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110207262.6.357</a>. 357.

reminiscent of those worn by Jewish citizens in Nazi-dominated countries.<sup>31</sup> The memory of the Holocaust serves not only as a reason for the creation of Israel but also for its sustained existence. The continued occupation of Palestine, military actions against the Palestinian people, and erasure of Palestinian culture are justified by the supposed need for a Jewish homeland in the wake of the Holocaust.<sup>32</sup>

Professor Dalia Ofer, an Israeli Professor born in Palestine who experienced life with Holocaust survivors daily as a child, explains how Israel strove to create a narrative by which historical memory coupled with Zionist ethos justified and normalized the existence of a Jewish state: "Israel was aiming to construct a master narrative of the Holocaust that would ensure recognition of the major elements of the Zionist ethos of destruction and rebirth and those of exile and redemption by utilizing the tools it had devised—Yad Vashem, state ceremonies, and the educational system." All of these act as tools of memory, by which the destruction of Palestine that was is completed, and in its place a Jewish state, Israel is born. This is not possible, or at least its feasibility is severely limited, without the use of memory politics by the Israeli government. This project requires reaching out to Jews, especially young Jews, in the diaspora and gaining their support for Israel. This outreach benefits Israel in two main ways. First, it reaches young Jews who might not otherwise experience Israel and strives to build a positive opinion of Israel through trips to Israel, educational programs, or other cultural, educational, or religious activities. Secondly, this programming appeals to older Israeli and diaspora Jews by

Ofer, Dalia. "We Israelis Remember, But How? The Memory of the Holocaust and the Israeli Experience." *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 70. https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.18.2.70.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Weiner, Melissa F. "Palestinian Erasure and Dehumanization in Introductory Sociology Texts." *Critical Sociology* 49, no. 6 (September 1, 2023): 993. https://doi.org/10.1177/08969205221132839.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup>Ofer, Dalia. "We Israelis Remember, But How? The Memory of the Holocaust and the Israeli Experience." *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 75. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.18.2.70">https://doi.org/10.2979/israelstudies.18.2.70</a>.

showing cultural Jewish education and the success of Zionist programs. This wins support for these types of programs and allows them to expand and reach more young Jews. It is crucial to understand that much of the memory culture experienced by these young Jews, including those on Swarthmore's campus in 2016, was the result of a deliberate decision to create a specific memory and memorialize the Holocaust.

In a recent article for *The New Yorker*, Masha Gessen writes about how deeply Holocaust memory runs in Germany. Angela Merkel, former German chancellor stated that part of Germany's "Staatsräson", the reason for the existence of the state, was the security of Israel. In the aftermath of the acceleration of conflict in Israel beginning in early October 2023, Germany has taken drastic steps to prosecute antisemitism and ensure the safety of Jewish citizens.<sup>34</sup> This crackdown has been coupled with action against Boycott, Divest, and Sanction (BDS) protests against the Israeli government and Palestinian Solidarity protests and marches.<sup>35</sup> The German government's views on the current war in Gaza and on domestic protests are deeply colored by Holocaust memory culture, and this culture was intentionally created by Israel. While there is no conclusive current scholarship, due to the recency of events, in the past, perceptions of Palestinian Liberation and BDS Movements have been colored for some students, especially Jewish students, by Holocaust memory.

For Jewish students at Swarthmore, the memories of the Holocaust were not far from their minds as they witnessed an act of swastika graffiti and the ensuing conversation about antisemitism. At the same time, the conditions of the present were never far from their mind as

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Gessen, Masha. "In the Shadow of the Holocaust." *The New Yorker*, December 9, 2023. https://www.newyorker.com/news/the-weekend-essay/in-the-shadow-of-the-holocaust.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> Shamir, Jonathan. "An Anti-Palestinian Crackdown Across Europe." Jewish Currents. Accessed December 14, 2023.

https://jewishcurrents.org/an-anti-palestinian-crackdown-across-europe.

they remembered the Holocaust. The past and present acted in complement to each other, shaping each other as history provided a lens through which to perceive the present, and simultaneously, memories created through collective and familial remembrance existed in service to the present. As students sought a way to cope with and understand the conditions they were witnessing, they were engaging in one of the most important parts of Jewish identity, zakhor. Zahkor, "to remember " in Hebrew, is an injunction repeated on holidays, issued repeatedly to the Israelites is a core part of Jewish identity. For Jews, "the past is never dead, its not even past." Rather it is a core part of the lived experience of Jews, especially those who live in families and communities that strive to ensure the past is not forgotten through the continued passing down of stories and traditions. This is supplemented by the memory work done by organizations such as Birthright and institutions such as Yad Vashem that work to ensure the continuity of Jewish memory and the identity so closely tied to it. The Holocaust and personal and familial memories of antisemitism are instrumental in understanding how these Jewish students perceived the world around them and debates about hate speech and Israel.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, "Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory," 2011, <a href="https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41">https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41</a> <a href="mailto:2sid=07dcb9be-cd15-402d-b80d-858743946c81@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\_vii&rid=0">https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41</a> <a href="mailto:2sid=07dcb9be-cd15-402d-b80d-858743946c81@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\_vii&rid=0">https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41</a> <a href="mailto:2sid=07dcb9be-cd15-402d-b80d-858743946c81@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\_vii&rid=0">https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41</a> <a href="mailto:2sid=07dcb9be-cd15-402d-b80d-858743946c81@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\_vii&rid=0">https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41</a> <a href="mailto:2sid=07dcb9be-cd15-402d-b80d-858743946c81@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\_vii&rid=0">https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTAwMHhuYV9fMTA1MjI5OV9fQU41</a> <a href="mailto:2sid=07dcb9be-cd15-402d-b80d-858743946c81@redis&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp\_vii&rid=0">https://web.puid=0.puid

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