

Dear Friends and Colleagues;

We at the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University send you warm greetings and best wishes for 2020.

I write to you about a month after the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. Sadly, the necessity of our scholarly and educational work – individually and collectively – continues unabated. We must, with historical evidence, challenge the misuse of Holocaust memory by various nationalist regimes. We must, through knowledge production and dissemination, counter and discredit the proliferation of nationalist, antisemitic, xenophobic, and racist thought and action. We must, through nuanced and sensitive comparisons, explore the lessons the past holds for our world today. In short, our work is critical and timely and the Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern strives to support the field of Holocaust Studies as broadly as possible.

As a result, this past year has seen a couple of firsts and in the year ahead, we will continue these new programs even as we look forward to marking an important milestone.

This summer marks the 25th anniversary of HEFNU's Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization. We will celebrate the silver anniversary of this educational program that has been important to a number of us in the field in two ways: a special summer lecture by long-time Summer Institute faculty member Roger Brooks, who will reflect on the past, present, and future of the program; and a roundtable at the next Lessons and Legacies Conference dedicated to discussion of university-level Holocaust education.

In November 2019, HEFNU, in cooperation with the Center for Holocaust Studies at the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History (Munich), Ludwig-Maximilians University, and the German Federal Agency for Civic Education, held a special Lessons and Legacies Conference in Munich. We had modest expectations for our first European conference, which were far exceeded in terms of interest, scholarship, and sustainability. The Call for Papers elicited a surprising 700 applications, of which we could accept only 200. The result was a phenomenal Conference that one participant described as a "Tour de Force." Other feedback noted: outstanding papers, important topics, participation of scholars new to Lessons and Legacies, and great opportunities for networking and collaboration. Our aim in holding the conference was to facilitate exactly these things. We aim to hold another conference in Europe in four years. We are tremendously grateful to our co-sponsors and the conference committee: Frank Bajohr, Giles Bennett, Dorota Glowacka, Hana Kubátová, Simon Lengemann, Andrea Löw, Sabine Schalm, and Kim Wünschmann.

We return to our biennial North American Lessons and Legacies Conference this coming November. It will be held in Ottawa, Ontario, 7-10 November 2020. The theme is "The Holocaust: Rethinking Paradigms in Research and Representation." We received unprecedented numbers of applications to the conference and we are pulling the program together as I write.

This past fall, HEFNU was delighted to host Dariusz Stola for our annual fall lecture held in cooperation with the Chabraja Center for Historical Studies. Stola is professor at the Polish Academy of Sciences and a historian, whose scholarship explores the history of Polish-Jewish relations, the Holocaust, the communist regime, international migrations, and Polish debates on all of these topics. Stola is also former director of the POLIN museum (2014-2019). His talk centered on the POLIN museum, which

opened its core exhibition just a few years ago. In its short history, the museum has drawn millions of visitors, attracted media attention, and garnered awards, but has also elicited vicious attacks from local media and political controversy. It is not a Holocaust museum, despite its location in the middle of the former Warsaw ghetto and adjacent to the ghetto memorial. Instead, the museum commemorates the nearly 1000 years of Polish Jewish history – from a time when the largest Jewish community in the world resided in Poland through the violent reduction in the size of that community to just a few thousand. Stola’s lecture expounded on these topics and explained the concepts and activities that shape the work of the museum.

This spring, we are very much looking forward to hosting Eva Hoffman for the annual Theodore Zev Weiss Annual Lecture in Holocaust Studies. Joining us to co-sponsor the event are: the History Department, The Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences Kreeger-Wolf Fund, the Kaplan Institute for the Humanities, and the Evanston Literary Festival. Hoffman will speak on 12 May on the topic of “Passing on the Wand,” in which she will reflect on the role and perspective of the post-Holocaust generation in extending our understanding of that history-altering event.

Last year, we held our inaugural Regional Institute on the Holocaust. We will continue that program this spring with the second Regional Institute to be held at the end of May in North Carolina with the collaboration of Duke University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Wake Forest University. Those universities will host 20 professors and advanced graduate students from the region to discuss, “Post-War Memory, Holocaust Memorialization, and the Implications for the Present.” We are grateful to Karen Auerbach, Paul Jaskot, and Barry Trachtenberg for bringing this program to fruition. We aim to hold two or three Regional Institutes during the 2020-2021 academic year. If you are interested in hosting a future HEFNU Regional Institute, please contact us at hef@northwestern.edu.

We look forward to seeing many of you in the months and year ahead. We wish you well in your endeavors to study and teach about the Holocaust and to affect positively the world around us. We hope that in our studies of the dark past, we find ways to illuminate the path in front of us, putting the humanity of all people at the very center of our work.

With best regards,

Sarah M. Cushman

Director