

June 2020

Dear Friends and Colleagues;

I wrote in the January newsletter that, "...the necessity of our scholarly and educational work – individually and collectively – continues unabated." Today, in the midst of the global movement for racial equity and a worldwide pandemic, this comment rings even truer. The COVID-19 pandemic not only disrupted the world economy, it also revealed in starker relief inequalities in the U.S. and abroad regarding health and access to healthcare, housing and job security, the criminal justice system, and educational and social infrastructure, among other areas of society. Against the backdrop of a growing movement toward equity and justice, we also have seen a resurgence of vitriol, some of which has misappropriated the Holocaust, intentionally and mistakenly.

The Holocaust Educational Foundation of Northwestern University (HEFNU) supports racial equity for African Americans and sustained and transformative attention to combatting the centuries-long legacy of racism in the United States. We denounce the use of state-sponsored violence that targets specific groups and denies civil rights, in particular, and stand against the abusive policing of Black American communities. As I share the latest HEFNU updates, we remain committed to scholarly and educational work that raises awareness of injustice and persecution.

Our work continues, even as we postponed all in-person HEFNU programs from spring 2020 through the end of the calendar year. We will conduct the 25th Summer Institute on the Holocaust and Jewish Civilization next summer. The 17th Biennial Lessons and Legacies Conference will take place in Ottawa from 6-9 November 2021. Eva Hoffman was to join us this past May and we now plan to host her in May 2021.

Our research and teaching grant competitions, moved forward as scheduled. We awarded five Sharon Abramson Research Grants for outstanding projects and four teaching grants for what we understand will be excellent new courses about the Holocaust. The pandemic may cause delays, but we look forward to their eventual implementation.

In the months ahead, it looks as though if we see you, it will only be virtually. Nevertheless, we wish you well in your study and teaching of the Holocaust. We hope that in our studies of the dark past, we find ways to illuminate the path in front of us, putting equity and justice at very center of our work.

With best regards,

Sarah M. Cushman

Director