

# די מאלינע

## DE MALYENE

The Virginia Holocaust Museum Newsletter  
Volume 16, Number 3 December 2014





# I Witnessed History



Cover by Molly Robbinson



## WHAT IS A MALYENE?

In Yiddish, “de malyene” means a raspberry bush, but in the slang of Eastern European Jews, it also meant “a hiding place.” “De malyene” is where you would protect your most precious valuables—gold, jewels, a small child or yourself.

Make a resolution not to hide, but come experience the Virginia Holocaust Museum with the many programs and events it has to share.

# GIVE THE GIFT OF MEMBERSHIP

Richmond and Virginia have the honor and privilege of being a second home to many Holocaust survivors. When you become a member of the Virginia Holocaust Museum, you will learn about local Richmond and Virginia Holocaust Survivors and help memorialize their stories of strength and courage.

The VHM teaches the history of the Holocaust but one of the most important objectives we strive to achieve is that patrons remember. We Remember what happens when hate and prejudice takes over a nation. We Remember when one stands up against hate. We Remember the innocent victims and the strong Survivors.

We do not always know the experiences of our neighbors. When a patron leaves the museum, they leave with an understanding of an experience of the Holocaust. That understanding turns into a story that they share with their loved ones, thereby circulating the stories of our Survivors. The circulation of these stories spreads our message expanding the flame of remembrance like wildfire. Help us extend this flame by renewing your membership or giving a membership to a loved one.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT MEMBERSHIPS YOU CAN VISIT**

**WWW.VAHOLOCAUST.ORG/CONTENT/SUPPORT**

**OR CALL US AT 804 257 5400 EXT. 243**

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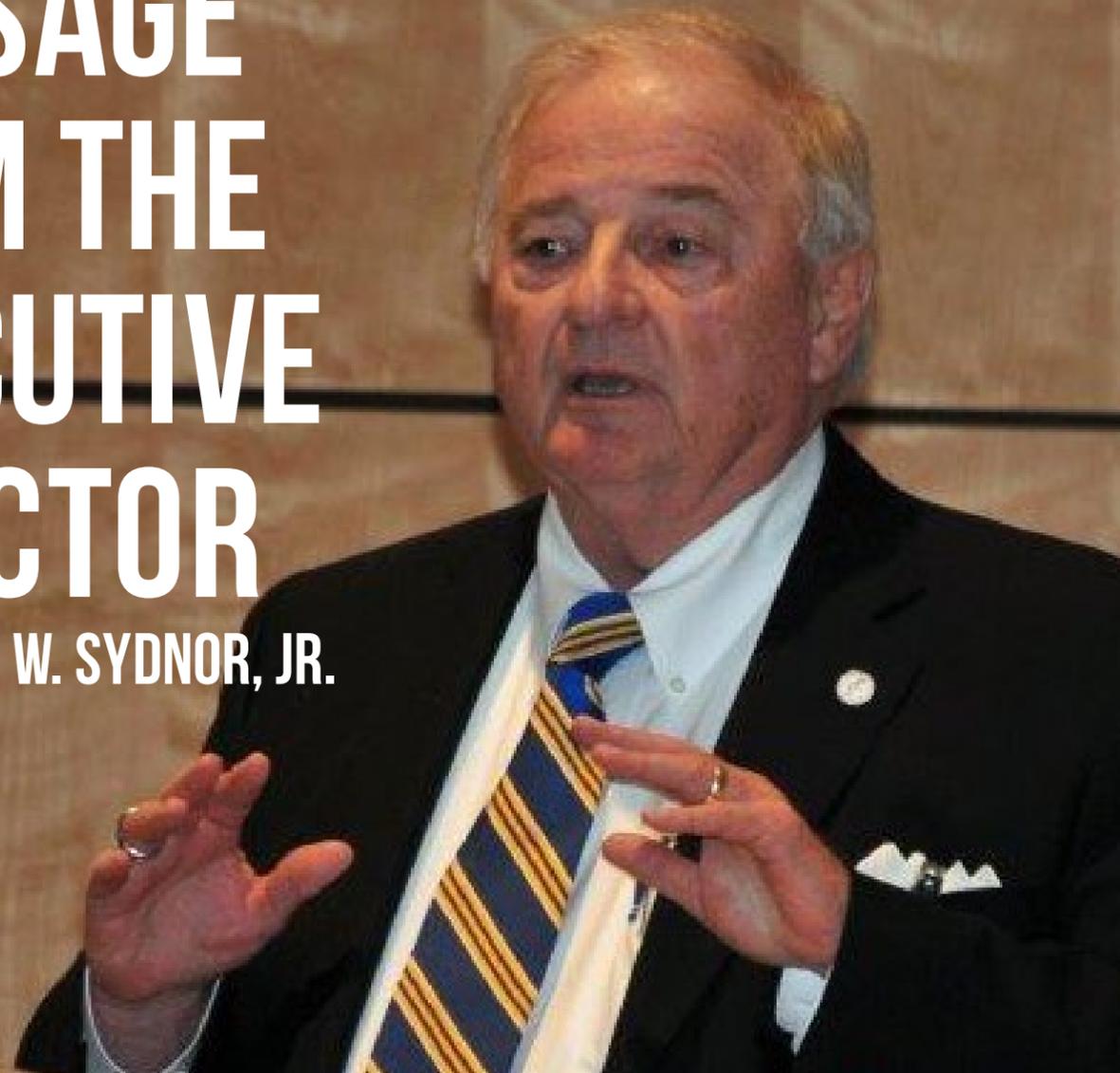
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# MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DR. CHARLES W. SYDNOR, JR.



At this interval between last summer and the months that lie ahead, all the signs point to this as an especially momentous time in the life of the Virginia Holocaust Museum. After a summer during which the Museum experienced record attendance, we are headed into the last month of our fiscal year on track to have 40,000 visitors tour the Museum in 2014. If the current pace of attendance seasonally tracks previous years, we could approach a total attendance of 43,000. Our two summer Teacher Education Institute (TEI) sessions, both of which were fully enrolled, drew public and private school teachers from throughout Virginia and were highlighted for the attendees by dinner programs presented by Holocaust Survivors Alan and Halina Zimm in the first session, and newly elected Museum Trustee and Holocaust Survivor Dr. Roger Loria in the second.

Visitors will notice new exhibits in the Dachau and concentration camp area of the Museum, expertly designed by Tim Hensley and Amy Mendelson-Cheeley to fill in gaps in the historical narrative about the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany and Hitler's accession to power in 1933. New exhibits in the coming months will also complete the chronology of major events between the Kristallnacht in November 1938 and Hitler's invasion of Soviet Russia and the Baltic States in June 1941—the decisive period in the German dictator's transformation of legalized anti-Jewish persecution into outright Nazi genocide. One of the central themes running through this period of transition to the Holocaust was the international controversy over the attempts at Jewish emigration from Germany and Nazi-occupied Europe, and the reluctance among the world's nations to open

their borders and offer a safe haven to those fleeing Hitler's war on the Jews. Among the most important of the recent scholarly books the Museum acquired for the Carole Weinstein Holocaust Research Library, and also has on sale in the Museum Shop, is the study by Dr. Richard Breitman, who is Distinguished Professor of History at American University, with the title *FDR and the Jews*. Professor Breitman is among the world's foremost authorities on the Holocaust and serves as editor of the quarterly historical journal of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*. *FDR and the Jews* has re-kindled widespread interest in this still intensely debated aspect of Holocaust history, and the Museum hopes Professor Breitman may be available to present a program about his book at the Museum sometime in 2015.

**“ALL THE SIGNS POINT TO THIS AS AN ESPECIALLY MOMENTOUS TIME IN THE LIFE OF THE VIRGINIA HOLOCAUST MUSEUM.”**

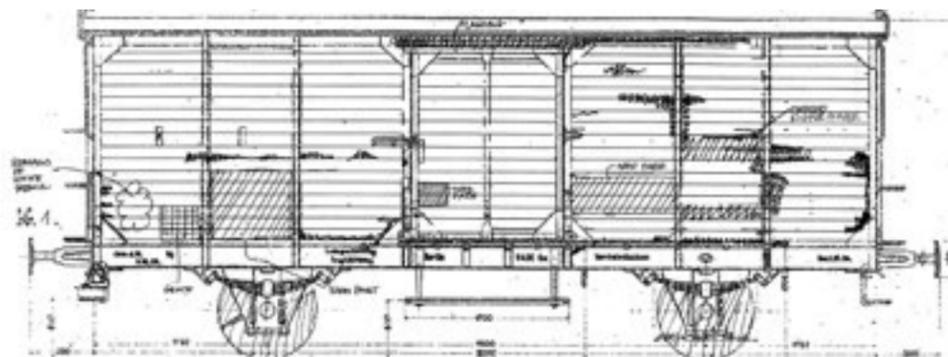
In special ceremonies in the Museum on Sunday, October 26, in the presence of Trustees, friends and supporters, and members of the family of Dr. Norman Sporn, the Museum Shop was formally dedicated as the Patricia R. Sporn Museum Shop to honor the memory of one of the Virginia Holocaust Museum's first great guiding figures and the driving force behind the establishment of the Museum Shop.

In January 2015, the Museum will join a growing community of historical institutions, libraries, archives, and national governments around the world creating programs to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the final months of the Holocaust in World War II. We will begin our observance of this historical watershed with two programs now in planning. The first, on the

afternoon of Sunday, January 25, 2015 will honor Survivors of Auschwitz with a program at the Virginia Holocaust Museum on the history of the camp that has become an historical synonym for the Holocaust. That program at the Museum will be free and open to the public. Then, on the evening of Tuesday, January 27, 2015—to observe the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camps by the Red Army on January 27, 1945, the Museum in partnership with the Richmond Jewish Federation and the Richmond Symphony will hold a dinner followed by a memorial concert by the Richmond Symphony and the Richmond Symphony Chorus at the Carpenter Center. Admission for the dinner and concert on January 27 will require the purchase of tickets, and we will publish all the details for these January 27 events as soon as the Symphony finalizes them.

The January 27 memorial concert will feature music created by Jewish composers and conductors, leading artists of the era of the Holocaust, who, as victims of the Nazis, were inmates of either or both the ghetto at Theresienstadt and the camps at Auschwitz. We will continue to post more detailed information about the Auschwitz programs, and the Museum's plans for other 70th anniversary events, on the Museum website, on our Facebook Page, via e-mail notices, and through ads and articles in *The Reflector*. Please keep an eye out for these announcements, and please do not hesitate to contact me at the Museum if you have questions about these or any other programs and activities of the Virginia Holocaust Museum; [csydnor@vaholocaust.org](mailto:csydnor@vaholocaust.org) 804.257.5400, extension 245.

Dr. Charles W. Sydnor, Jr.  
President and Executive Director  
Virginia Holocaust Museum



# THE VHM BOXCAR: PRESERVING AN ICONIC SYMBOL

The first thing most visitors to the museum notice is the boxcar that sits in front of the building on East Cary Street. What many may not know is that it is an authentic artifact from Germany. The Deutsche Reichsbahn “goods wagon” is a covered, wood-sided freight car originally designed to transport cargo. Though we do not know if it was used to transport victims, the boxcar is one of the varieties used by the Nazis to transport Jews to concentration camps across Europe. Packed with 100 – 120 people, without food or water, and exposed to extreme weather for days at a time, thousands of people died on these trips.

Through the efforts of local Holocaust survivor, the late Alex Lebenstein OBM, and his connections with his hometown of Haltern am See, Germany, the boxcar was shipped to Richmond in 2003. As an iconic artifact from the Holocaust, the Museum is regularly assessing its condition and taking the necessary steps to ensure it will be here for generations to come.

This summer, the boxcar was nominated by the VHM as one of Virginia’s Top 10 Endangered Artifacts, a program sponsored by the Virginia Association of Museums. The program was established to help the museum community raise public awareness about the important role archival professionals’ play in preserving historic artifacts. The boxcar was one of 36 nominees and received over 2500 votes during public voting.

Visitors have the opportunity to step inside the boxcar and think about what they learned in the Museum. The boxcar serves as a powerful reminder of the atrocities committed by the Third Reich during the Holocaust.



Alex Lebenstein OBM



# AUSTRIAN SERVICE ABROAD

Austrian Service Abroad is an institution which provides young male Austrians with a government funded alternative to the compulsory military service. The Austrian Service Abroad offers three different types of services:

## Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service

This program was founded in 1992 and has been a part of the association Austrian Service Abroad since 1998. It deals with the victims of Nazism. Austrian Holocaust Memorial servants work for Holocaust memorials, like museums and research facilities such as: The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, the Jewish Museum Berlin, the European Roma Rights Centre in Budapest, Yad Vashem in Jerusalem or the Virginia Holocaust Museum in Richmond.

For several years now, Austrian Holocaust Memorial servants also have been sent to assignments in former refuge countries of the victim groups persecuted by the Nazis, for example the Casa Stefan Zweig in Petrópolis (Brazil), the Centre for Jewish Studies in Shanghai, as well as the Jewish Museum of Australia in Melbourne. Since 1992, hundreds of young Austrian Holocaust Memorial servants in 22 countries have reappraised the history of the Holocaust worldwide and made an important contribution to the Austrian processing of history.

## Austrian Social Service

It is performed within the scope of projects that serve the economic and social development of the respective country. Since October 1998, hundreds of Austrian Social servants were predominantly assigned to countries in Central and South America, Africa and Asia. But also organizations like The Royal London Society for the Blind in England and the orphanage faith in Saint Petersburg (Russia) are part of this worldwide network.

## Austrian Peace Service

Peace servants are occupied within organizations that serve the achievement or protection of peace in connection with armed conflicts. They work, e.g., in non-state organizations in Israel where they organize workshops or common initiatives of the conflicting parties. In Nanjing in China a peace service application place exists since 2008 in the John Rabe house which reappraises the massacre of Nanjing in 1937.



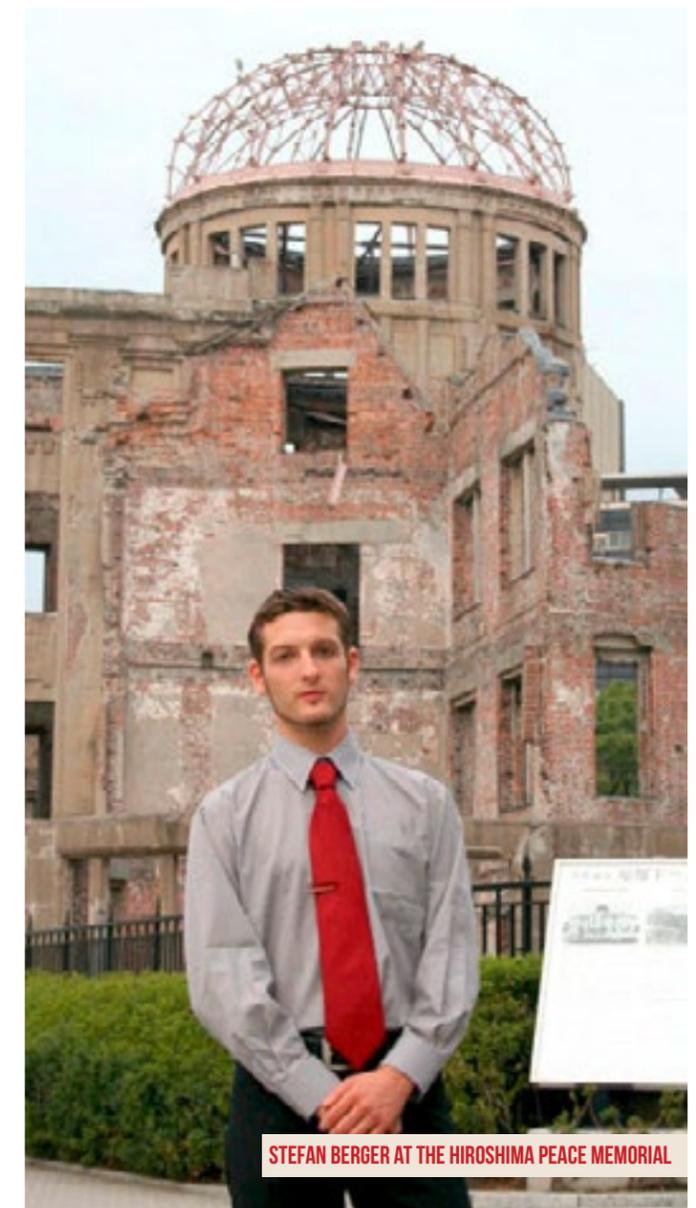
THE AUSTRIAN HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL SERVANTS MEET THE PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA, HEINZ FISCHER, BEFORE SERVICE



AUSTRIAN SERVICE ABROAD INTEREST EVENT



GABRIEL SCHALLER AT THE LOS ANGELES MUSEUM OF THE HOLOCAUST



STEFAN BERGER AT THE HIROSHIMA PEACE MEMORIAL



Sam Mihara will speak at the VHM on December 13th



# I Witnessed History

The Virginia Holocaust Museum looks to educate visitors on the history of the Holocaust as well as on the dangers of intolerance and hate through exhibits and programming. In an effort to continue to bring quality educational programming, the *I Witnessed History* program, which will debut this December, gives Museum visitors the opportunity to hear the life experiences of extraordinary individuals who lived during tumultuous times in history. Formatted as an hour long interview conducted by Museum staff, followed by an open question and answer session, audience members will have the opportunity to participate to learn more about the Museum's inspiring guests. The primary goals of *I Witnessed History* are to help visitors understand the importance of tolerance and to provide primary accounts of the past. Speakers will be featured over the next few months and will include: a Holocaust survivor, World War II veteran and a second generation Japanese-American who was held in an internment camp in Wyoming during World War II.

This program is free and open to the public. The first *I Witnessed History* installment will be held the December 13th at 1pm on the second floor of the Museum. For further information please visit the Museum's website, [www.vaholocaust.org](http://www.vaholocaust.org).

# BOOK REVIEW

## MENGELE: THE COMPLETE STORY

*Mengele: The Complete Story* written by Gerald L. Posner and John Ware is a thorough, horrific, frustrating and infuriating autobiography of Dr. Josef Mengele "the angel of Death at Auschwitz." If you are looking to read exclusively about the horrific experiments that Dr. Mengele performed on twins and other victims, this is not that book. Although it does begin with Dr. Mengele's life during the Holocaust, it quickly shifts to his life as a fugitive.

Posner and Ware begin the book with a detailed description of how Dr. Mengele became a doctor, and his association with the Nazi Party. In what was a relatively short chapter, but felt as if it took hours to read, Posner and Ware examine and describe in horrific detail some of the various experiments Dr. Mengele performed during his time as a doctor at Auschwitz. The remainder of the book delves into the infuriating saga of Dr. Mengele's arrest and escape from Germany, life as a refugee, immigrant and criminal on the run in Buenos Aires and Paraguay. With the help of Nazi sympathizers, corrupt dictators, and his rich and well-connected family, Mengele was able to escape capture and prosecution by the Israeli government. Dr. Mengele occasionally was able to practice as a doctor, and for some time used his real name instead of a pseudonym. At various times during the book it began to feel as if one was reading a fictitious crime novel. It didn't seem real how often one person could manage to not be captured, sometimes because of the help of others and at other times what seemed like pure luck.



Using "unrestricted access to over 5,000 pages of personal writings and family photos," the authors' piece together and attempt to understand the motivation of the notorious German physician and SS-Hauptsturmfuher Josef Mengele, who did not feel guilty or remorseful for the pain and suffering he put people through at Auschwitz, but actually felt as if he was saving people and doing a good thing. The fact that Mengele was not the only person to feel as if he was doing something beneficial was a fearful realization. But it also sparked a sense of urgency in making sure that future generations are aware and understand the consequences that hate, prejudice and stereotypes can have on a society.

Come by the VHM Gift Shop to pick up a copy of *Mengele: The Complete Story*. If you are interested in volunteering and spreading awareness of the atrocities committed during the Holocaust to future generations please contact us at (804)257-5400 or fill out the volunteer application form on our website [www.vaholocaust.org](http://www.vaholocaust.org). Posner, Gerald L., and John Ware. *Mengele: The Complete Story*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986. Print.

# MEET OUR INTERNS

Each semester the VHM is joined by hard-working interns from many different colleges and universities. These interns are invaluable in helping the VHM fulfill our mission.

## Jalesa

Working under Megan Ferenczy in the Education Department of the Virginia Holocaust Museum has been such a rewarding experience for me from day one. Not only have I been able to work on projects to help better educate the public about the Holocaust, as well as the importance of promoting tolerance in today's society, but I've been able to see and learn and be a part of the inner workings of a museum. I had the privilege of working with Megan on the Acceptance Suitcase project within the Education Department and have gotten to provide critical information for the revamping of the project. I was tasked with researching and creating a table of contents for high school and middle school teachers for three books from our *Acceptance Suitcases*, *Survival in Auschwitz*, *Number the Stars*, and *Black Radishes*. My time at the museum has transferred over into both my undergraduate studies as well as my graduate work at VCU. My research initially focused on the Nazi eugenics and euthanasia campaigns and the American influence on them, but now is a more comparative research of different eugenic movements around the world. After I finish my Master's degree, I intend to continue my research and education at the University of Toronto in hopes of obtaining a Ph.D. in History through their Genocide and Human Rights program. With a degree in History, many avenues for potential careers have been opened to me and I fully intend to explore them all in hopes of finding the right one.



## Larisa

I came to the Virginia Holocaust Museum from Tufts University, where I am earning an MA in History and Museum Studies. I have studied the Holocaust intensively since early on in my college career, and I am passionate about pursuing a career in Holocaust Education. Here at the museum, I am working on two major projects, the first of which is developing a new part of the "Acceptance Suitcases" program which will allow Virginia teachers to check out themed boxes full of primary source documents, photographs, objects, and lesson plans that will help them enhance their teaching of the Holocaust in the classroom. My other major project is assisting with the Teacher Education Institute (TEI) which the museum runs in two, weeklong sessions each summer. Here I am honing my Holocaust History and Holocaust Education knowledge and experience to help facilitate group discussions, to assist teachers with their final projects, to help teach sessions on pedagogy and best practices in Holocaust Education, and to generally support the Director of Education in the running of all aspects of the program. When I am not studying or going to class, I work as a docent at the Vilna Shul, an immigrant-era synagogue turned museum in Boston, and I also teach Zumba in the Boston area.



## Lauren

My name is Lauren Souther, and I am from Lafayette, Louisiana. I graduated from the University of Louisiana at Lafayette in the spring of 2013 with a BA in History with a German minor. In the fall of 2013, I moved to Boone, North Carolina, to earn a MA in Public History. I am interested in American Women's History, Holocaust History, the history of religion, and the history of the American Civil Rights Movement. I feel especially lucky that I am able to research and expand my knowledge on a historical subject that I have always been passionate about. As an intern in the VHM's archives, I work directly under the Assistant Archivist Megan Ramsey. My projects have included taking inventory of the current exhibits, organizing accession forms, and digitizing the accession forms. Also, I have been creating finding aids for Dr. Charles Sydnor's Office of Special Investigations files in order to help future academics research Sydnor's trial work. After I graduate I hope to find a job in the museum field, working as a curator or as an archivist. I would love to work in a museum which focuses on Holocaust history and genocide studies. It is refreshing to be given the opportunity to step outside of the classroom and into a profession public history environment. This internship has allowed me to partake in true archival and curatorial roles, and my work here has helped me realize that museum work and holocaust history are my true passions in life.



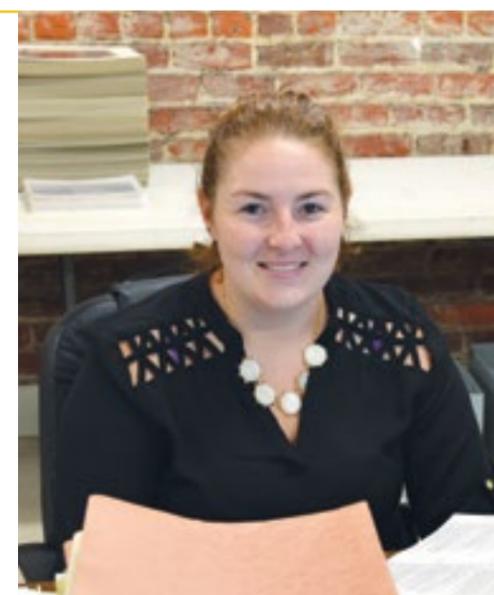
## Molly

I arrived at the Virginia Holocaust Museum this summer with little knowledge about the projects on which I would be working. While background research furnished knowledge that has been fuel for ideas, nothing could have quite prepared me for the plunge into albums of photographs that were taken in ghettos and concentration camps. Working so closely with the memory of the Holocaust is humbling and thought-provoking. As an intern, my primary role is to design and create environmental aspects of three new exhibits: Concentration camps after 1939, ghettos, and the T4 Euthanasia program. My passion for art is reflected in the plans I have for installations, which include wire sculpture and illustrated panels. My intention is to include captivating three-dimensional elements in the new exhibits. I frequently find myself working against a contradiction as I design new plans: How can we achieve beauty in the form of honor and recognition when the event being commemorated is so horrifying and unfathomable? Designing aesthetically "beautiful" exhibits that will speak to and inform the public about such an ugly event can be difficult. It is such a privilege to have access to knowledge via resources and the Museum's staff, and I'm very grateful to be spending my summer here.



## Logan

My name is Logan Carter and I am from Richmond, Virginia. I am a recent graduate of Randolph College in Lynchburg, Virginia. I graduated with a bachelor's degree in History and a minor in Psychology and Sports and Exercise Studies. I have had an interest in learning about the Holocaust for years and spent the majority of my college years taking various European and genocide classes. As part of my senior paper on the role of Nazi doctors in the Auschwitz concentration camp, I spent a week in Poland researching and touring the concentration camp. My dream is to be involved in museum work and become a curator so I can teach others how important learning about the Holocaust is. I am grateful for this opportunity to intern at the museum and gain experience for what I want to do as my career.

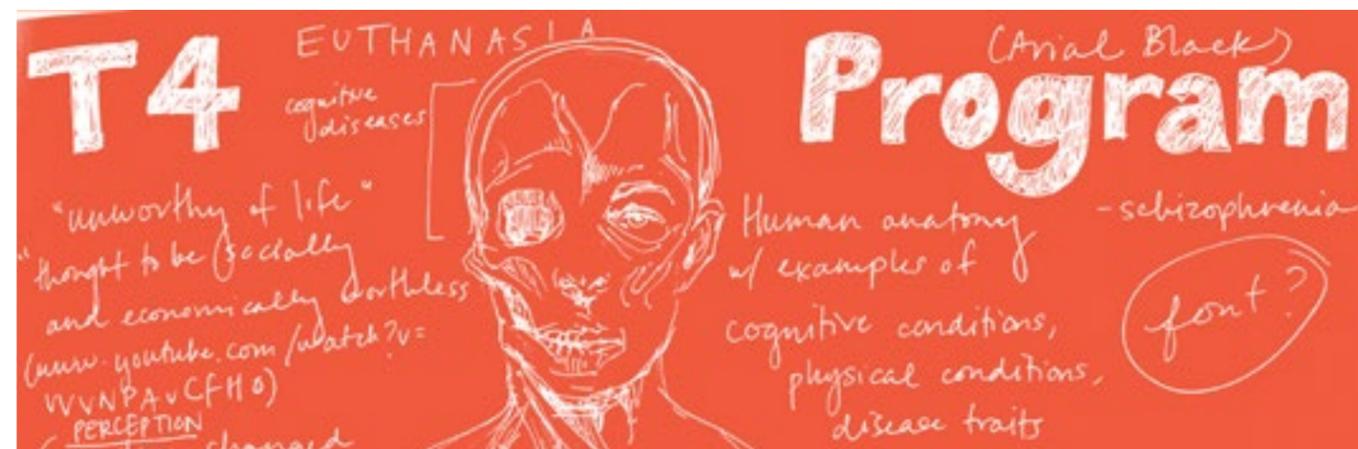




# EXHIBIT DESIGN



## INSIDE OUR FIRST EVER DESIGN INTERNSHIP PROGRAM



The Virginia Holocaust Museum receives approximately 25 applicants every semester from college students who are interested in getting hands-on experience in a public history museum. The majority of interns come from local colleges, but this summer we saw a shift in this trend with three different students from out-of-state institutions – Tufts, Appalachian State, and the University of Chicago.

The role interns play in the Museum is ever-evolving based on our needs. In the Collections Department, we use students to create finding aids; digitize documents; work on preservation issues; and assist in processing; with the exception of Molly Robinson.

Molly is originally from the Richmond area. In 2008, as middle school student, she entered the VHM art contest with a watercolor entitled *Judging the Injustice*. As a junior at Henrico High School, she again entered the 2011 art contest and won first place for her portrait of a Tuareg rebel from Mali. After finishing her first year at the University of Chicago, Molly asked if she might be able to intern with the Museum during the summer. This was the perfect opportunity to bring in an artist to do concept work.

Molly is currently working on several exhibit areas:

*Anti-Jewish Legislation* is focusing on the raft of decrees and laws that systematically dismantled Jewish freedom in Germany between 1933 and 1938. The exhibit will demonstrate how everyday life became more problematic for Jews until the outbreak of Kristallnacht, signaling the beginning of violent attacks on the population.

*The Expansion of the Concentration Camps* will cover the period 1939–1945 when the camp system was growing during the Nazi occupation of Eastern Europe. The exhibit will illustrate the increasing classification of prisoners; the use of inmates for medical experiments; and the Nazis' evolving policy of annihilation through labor.

*Eastern European Ghettos* will describe the segregation and consolidation of Jews, particularly in Poland, and their use as forced labor prior to the implementation of the Final Solution. The exhibit will illustrate the physical separation of the Jews from their surrounding urban centers and highlight the living conditions within these isolated populations.

For each of these, she is producing conceptual drawings and organizing the build out of the physical spaces. While the exhibits will likely not be complete until later in the fall, through her work this summer each of these exhibits will have a distinct feel that meshes with the overall aesthetics of the Museum. Currently her involvement in our permanent exhibits, Molly is current the featured artist in the Weinstein Art Gallery. Her collection of work focuses on the lives impacted by human rights abuses. These paintings will be on display through the end of the year. Molly's work will become a permanent part of the Museum's legacy. There is no doubt visitors will find her creations inspirational in enhancing the tone of our message, and we are fortunate to have her as part of our community of supporters.

Photos

Right: Molly sewing on patches

Above: Sketches and research for exhibit concepts



**Virginia Holocaust Museum**

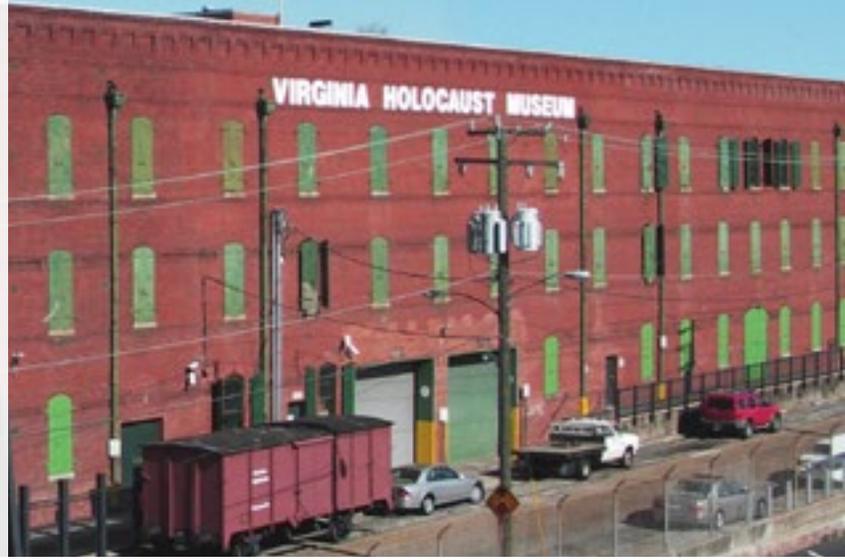
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