

**Holocaust Center, Boston North 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Brunch  
Fourth Annual Social Justice and Human Rights Award**

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Thank you for your very gracious and kind remarks. I deeply appreciate your thoughtfulness in presenting me this award. Polly and I are so pleased and honored to be part of this 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. It is truly amazing all that Harriet, Sonia and their team have accomplished in educating for justice and human rights in these twenty-five short years.

In accepting this award, I do so acknowledging there are many important people here today who are worthy of recognition—especially the officers, board members, survivors and friends—without whose support the educational vision of this fine organization would not be what it is today. You are the faithful people we also honor today, for in honoring one, we are indeed honoring all. Thank you for the many things you have contributed to enable the Holocaust Center to reach this significant milestone.

I want to acknowledge a dear friend, Karen Teyler. Karen came to last year's Holocaust Center event in Boston, when various liberators of the camps were honored. She has helped get the message of Sonia and the Holocaust Center out there through her website on Antisemitism found at [www.watchorg.com](http://www.watchorg.com). Karen drove all the way from Billings, Montana to be present for today's event.

I also want to acknowledge our Gordon College table. I am delighted that this group of friends and colleagues could attend this event; among them are some faculty, administrators and some former students -including Jenna who interned at the Holocaust Center. I appreciate so very much that each of you could come.. I especially want to thank Dr. Kina Mallard, Dean of Gordon's Faculty, who is present today. I am especially grateful for her help in coordinating the Gordon College table.

I am very thankful for what the Holocaust Center Boston North stands for. Again and again, I have witnessed the positive effect of its educational programming. Take Sonia Weitz, for example. Everyone loves Sonia. This courageous woman has spoken at Gordon College for 26 years in a row. Sonia's 27<sup>th</sup> appearance will be coming up soon. If you have never heard Sonia, you need to hear her. Sonia's story and her life have touched literally thousands of our college students. This I *know*, because the students tell me. Also, I have shared dozens of student response papers with Sonia herself.

Today we celebrate the first 25 years—extraordinary years-- of the Center's work. Year after year, the Center has faithfully kept the message of the Holocaust alive; the Center's flame continues to burn brightly. It continues to be a voice of courage, reason, and moral accountability. It remains vitally committed to educate on justice issues and human rights concerns locally and elsewhere. The Holocaust Center makes it a practice of "Looking Backwards to the Future," so that "Lessons and Parallels" may be drawn, for the Center teaches that all caring people must "Say No to Hate."

As for myself, I also wish to pay tribute to my wife Polly. She remains a great support in my teaching about the history of antisemitism and the Holocaust, and also in the work we have done to build understanding and respect between Christians and Jews. I am delighted Polly, and her sister Phyllis and husband Jack, are here today. Polly has been my spouse for fifty years. She is still my best friend and greatest encourager.

In 1971, when Polly and I moved to the North Shore, she did not say to me, "You do your thing and I'll do mine." Rather, during these past 37 years I have taught at Gordon, Polly has been there --sometimes quietly and sometimes vocally-- standing beside me to

support my educational endeavors both on and off campus. This fall semester, just as she has for decades, Polly is involved weekly with one of my courses which deals with the history of the Jewish people and Christian-Jewish relations. In this course, she uses her musical gifts to help teach students some of the traditional music of the Jewish people. In addition, she has stood with me, committed to the improvement of Christian-Jewish relations and to the pursuit of a secure and lasting peace for Israel and justice among all the peoples of the Middle East.

As we all know, much of the modern state of Israel was built by the hands of many who were personally and tragically scarred by the horrendous events of the Holocaust. Polly is half Armenian. Many of those on her mother's side of the family were snuffed out in a massive destruction of the Armenian people just before World War I; Polly's own mother, born about 350 miles north of Jerusalem, was a young girl at the time of the Armenian devastation; she escaped with her parents and came by ship to America and settled in Revere, just North of Boston.

To its credit, the Holocaust Center has education materials on the Armenian people and a number of other peoples who have faced devastating losses in the past century. Peter Torigian, the late mayor of Peabody, was a great friend and supporter of the Holocaust Center. Concerned about every ethnic group within his city, the mayor's own family had suffered the affects of the Armenian atrocity.

On the many trips Polly and I have taken to Jerusalem, in addition to spending time in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, we have always made it a point to visit the Armenian Quarter. And there, we have often reminded each other about Hitler's infamous line, spoken only 30 short years after the Armenian people had lost one and a half million lives. Said, Hitler, "Who remembers the Armenians?" That line is now prominently displayed in the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC, reminding the world of a people who were decimated while the world said very little. Hardly more than a decade after Hitler boasted, "Who remembers the Armenians?" six million Jews would perish in the Holocaust. While this mind boggling heist of history was happening, again the world sadly said very little, and stood by watching.

And so I want to thank you, Polly, for the support you have been to me as an educator these many years. You have been there, and I thank you. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to Harriet Wacks and Sonia Weitz. It has been a delight working with them as they have personally supervised nearly thirty of our Gordon College students who have done internships at the Holocaust Center. These have been great experiences for our young people.

For all of us here today, we celebrate 25 years of the Holocaust Center's many accomplishments, but we must all press forward as new challenges lie ahead. As an ancient Talmudic sage reminds us, "We may not complete the task but neither are we free to desist from it."

In wrapping up my thoughts on this special occasion, as we move into the future, we must not forget the pertinent words of Abraham Heschel. He warned about "indifference to evil," complacency and despair. Heschel, who lost many of his family in Poland during the Holocaust, leaves us a challenge. And that challenge is an agenda for the future. "Persist"! "Never give up!" urged Heschel. "Continue to conquer evils one by one, until the conquering of the Evil One".

More power to the Holocaust Center, and continued success in the days ahead, in addressing this challenging yet ever so vital task. Again, my deep thanks to Sonia, Harriet and the Holocaust Center for its graciousness in presenting me this award.