

## *TESTIMONY ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES:*

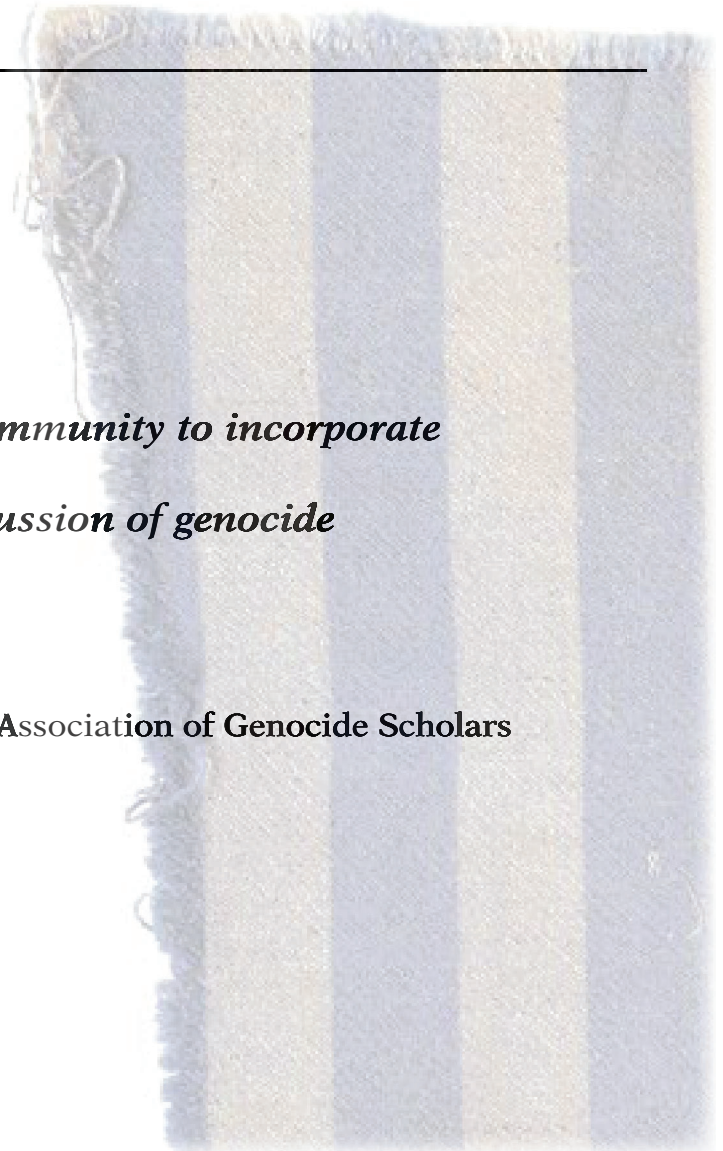
Queensborough Community College Students Respond to Genocide through Art and Writing



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*“It is incumbent upon the academic community to incorporate the arts into the broader scholarly discussion of genocide and mass atrocity.”*

— International Association of Genocide Scholars



# ***TESTIMONY ACROSS THE DISCIPLINES:***

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## **Queensborough Community College Students Respond to Genocide through Art and Writing**

A Student-Led Capstone Exhibition of the 2014-2015 NEH Challenge/KHRCA Colloquia Series  
April 16 – May 21, 2015

The Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives  
Queensborough Community College, The City University of New York

Professor Cary Lane and Dr. Steven Dahlke  
Co-Project investigators of the 2014-2015 NEH Challenge Grant/KHRCA Colloquia Series

Dr. Dan Leshem, Director, Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives

Dr. Arthur Flug, Former Executive Director, Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives

Ms. Marisa L. Berman, Assistant Director, Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives

Ms. Patricia Thomas, Office Assistant, Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives

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by Professor Cary Lane, Department of Academic Literacy  
Co-Project Investigator, 2014-2015 NEH Challenge Grant/KHRCA Colloquia Series

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# *Preface*

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In the fall semester of 2013, I had a student in my academic literacy class named Neil McKnight, a soft-spoken and thoughtful young man who identified himself as a self-taught artist and poet. As is often the case with adult developmental education students, they bring rich, diverse experiences to the classroom – ideal for creative pedagogies and evidence-based approaches like high-impact teaching.

At the time, I had just started using the Kupferberg Holocaust Resource Center and Archives as a service-learning partner to contextualize thematic readings on discrimination, bias, empathy and genocide in my classes. At the KHRCA, students were able to interview and form relationships with Holocaust Survivors, receive interactive, multimedia-based lessons from the KHRCA's talented staff, peruse exhibitions chock full of wall text and powerful art, use their quiet and spacious library, and research, discuss, reflect and write about it all.

There was a breakthrough moment in this particular class. As part of an information literacy assignment, Neil supplemented his collaborative, thematic research project with a personal touch: a recorded video of a poem he created and recited, entitled, “I Am Genocide” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW2ADs0c7Bc>). Without knowing it, this was the moment Neil declared himself ready for college-level academics – and did so by responding to challenging course content through art.

Neil's powerful creative response to his study of genocide inspired the concept for the 2014-2015 NEH Challenge Grant and its capstone, student-led exhibit, “Testimony Across the Disciplines: Queensborough Community College Students Respond to Genocide through Art and Writing”. I wanted to mimic and scale the experience Neil had, do it across multiple disciplines, expose students to a common intellectual experience, unify the campus's cultural resources, professors, visiting scholars and library resources, and deliver a student-created multimedia capstone exhibit and performance at the end of the year.

Thank you to the 15 professors, 300 students, 7 visiting scholars, library staff, Marketing and Communications Office, and especially the KHRCA for joining forces to create such a powerful, student-centered experience here at Queensborough Community College.

*Congratulations to our students! Enjoy the exhibition.*

**Cary Lane**

Co-Project Investigator, 2014-2015 NEH Challenge Grant/KHCRA Colloquia  
Department of Academic Literacy, Queensborough Community College, CUNY



# *Testimony Across the Disciplines:*

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## **Queensborough Community College Students Respond to Genocide Through Art and Writing**

The 2014-2015 NEH Challenge Grant Colloquia presents “Testimony Across the Disciplines: Queensborough Community College Students Respond to Genocide through Art and Writing.” This exhibition is the culmination of collaborative efforts made through student-centered, large-scale, interdisciplinary pedagogical projects. These projects were completed by over 300 students and 20 faculty members involving 10 academic disciplines and 5 colleges. “Testimony Across the Disciplines” showcases an array of works by students who have conducted research and cultural and artistic responses to genocide and organized hate. These students worked closely with faculty members, Holocaust survivors, victims and offenders of incarceration, and genocide scholars. Many of them were involved in interdisciplinary research collaborations, writing workshops, curatorial projects, and cultural and artistic immersions. The exhibition aims to provide visitors with a variety of ways to explore visual and literary responses to the painful experience of genocide and organized hate. The exhibition serves as a catalyst for visitors to envision a better future.

### **Student Curators of Dr. Jung Joon Lee:**

Joanne Perez

Lauren Hussey

Jeongmin Song

with help of Kimani Magloire

# Profiles of Survival:

## Holocaust Survivors of the KHRCA

This piece was a collaborative effort between Academic Literacy ESL students and Art & Design photography students to visually and verbally document the experiences of the Harriet and Kenneth Kupferberg Holocaust Center and Archives Holocaust Survivors. The collaboration involved personal and group interviews of the Survivors' experiences by **Professor Julia Carroll's** BE226 ESL reading students, while photographic portraits (visual biographies) were simultaneously captured by **Professor Jules Allen's** photography students. Together, the biographical summaries and visual portraits communicate the Survivors' stories through a powerful media synthesis; and, to document and archive the experience, the collaborative process was captured on video.

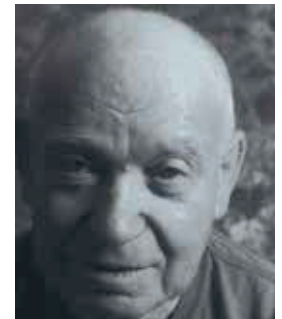
The ESL students who wrote the biographies were fortunate not only to learn directly from survivors of the Holocaust, but also to hear the voices and life stories of men and women from a different generation and culture. At times, it was a challenging experience due to language barriers. However, by the end of the project, these students discovered many important facts about the tragedy of the Holocaust from those who lived through it. Prior to their interview experience, Dr. Carroll's students had very little knowledge of WWII or the Holocaust. After completing the project, many of the students said their lives would never be the same and that they will continue to reflect upon the hatred the survivors endured in order think about ways to prevent this type of genocide from reoccurring in the future.



RENEE K. SILVER  
WAS BORN  
IN 1931 IN  
SAARLAND, AN  
INDEPENDENT  
REGION LOCATED  
BETWEEN FRANCE  
AND GERMANY



ETHEL KATZ WAS  
BORN IN 1922  
IN A VILLAGE IN  
POLAND



SAMI STEIGMANN  
WAS BORN  
IN 1939 IN  
CZERNOWITZ,  
ROMANIA

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**Jules Allen's  
photography students:**

Kevin Julian

Bret J. Kerven

Kenneth Yurkovitch

**Dr. Julia Carroll's  
Academic Literacy  
Students:**

Dimitris Filippou

Eunji Jun

Haeun (Jasmine) Kim

Haoyu Li

Haotian Liu

Jason Murat

Mahishi Dodanduwa Waduge

William Wu

Ying Ying Zhuo



HANNE LIEBMANN  
WAS BORN IN  
1924, IN GERMANY



ELENA BERKOVITS  
WAS BORN  
IN 1928 IN  
TRANSYLVANIA



HANNAH DEUTCH  
WAS BORN  
IN 1922 IN  
DUSSELDORF,  
GERMANY



HARRY PLAUT WAS  
BORN IN 1921,  
IN FRANKFURT,  
GERMANY



ELLEN ZILKAWAS  
BORN ON 1928 IN  
BERLIN, GERMANY



LENA GOREN WAS  
BORN IN 1930  
IN A GERMAN  
VILLAGE NAMED  
SALONIKA



## Graphic Narratives and Objects Reflections

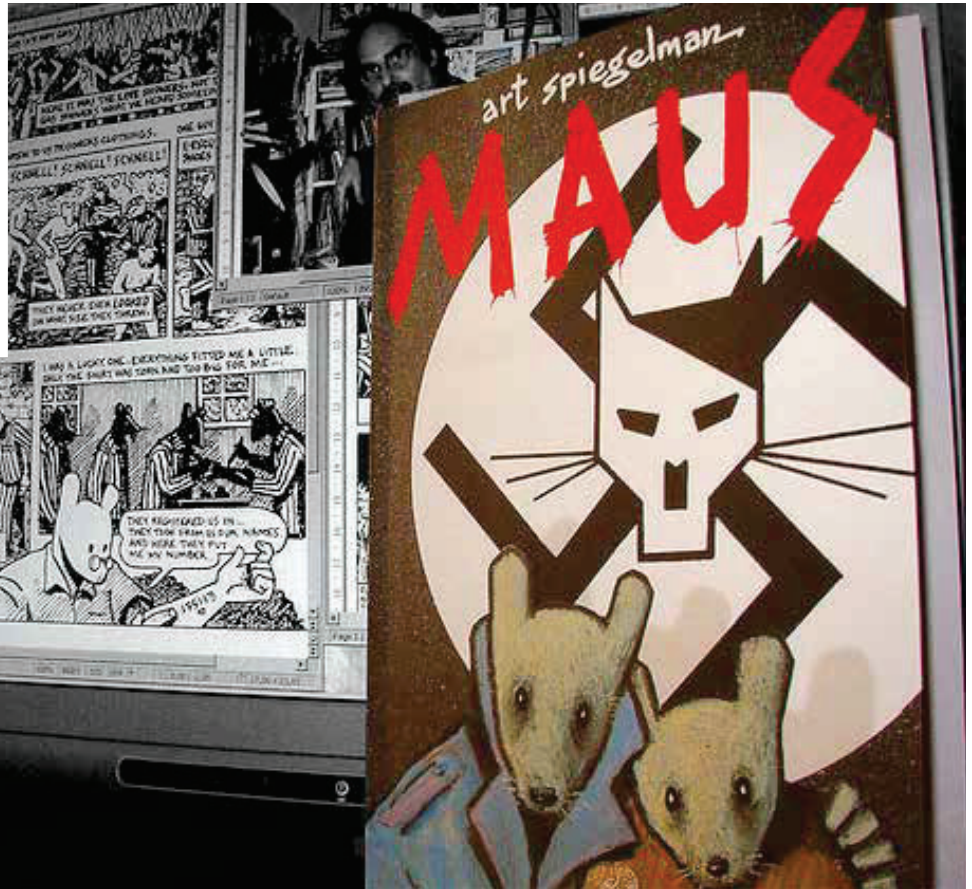
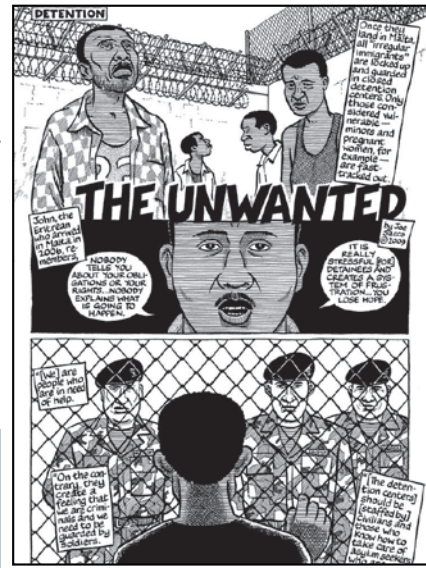
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One way of using literature to represent the Holocaust is through graphic narratives. Graphic narratives are stories that combine visual and textual elements to form a unique reading experience. Authors of graphic narratives often conduct research on a specific genre or subject, and by combining words and images together they create an appealing form of literature that allows the reader to verbally and visually experience the narrative.

This part of the exhibition includes graphic narratives written by students of English 224, Exploring Graphic Genres, led by **Dr. Susan Jacobowitz**. The course readings for this class include Art Spiegelman's *Maus I & II*, Alan Moore's *Watchmen*, as well as other graphic novels that served as examples of graphic narratives exploring mature themes. Students created their own graphic narratives exploring the theme of genocide or themes related to genocide, war, identity, and ethnicity. The students explored different methods of combining visual images with research under the same genre or artist.

This section of the exhibition also displays photographs of items from the Holocaust. In this installation, Professor Jacobowitz's students also created works of prose from the point of view of a certain item such as a Star of David badge, or a stained piece of cloth with a prisoner's number on it. These writings offer a unique and different perspective to understanding the Holocaust. The graphic narratives and writings are the culmination of the research students conducted and used to express the topic of genocide, as well as other important topics related to genocide.





RIGHT: DR. JACOBOWITZ'S ENGLISH STUDENTS READ GRAPHIC NARRATIVES BASED ON THE HOLOCAUST AND MASS ATROCITY, INCLUDING THOSE OF ART SPIEGELMAN AND JOE SACCO, AS INSPIRATION FOR THEIR OWN GRAPHIC RESPONSES

LEFT: STUDENTS CREATED WORKS OF PROSE IN RESPONSE TO CHOSEN ARTIFACTS FROM THE HOLOCAUST

# *Restorative Justice and Community Healing*

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Many malicious crimes and atrocities have been committed throughout history and, unfortunately, continue to be committed today. These crimes are often resolved by punishing the people who are responsible.

However, this does not always serve as a true resolution to the problem itself. Sometimes the damage caused by the offender is not reparable by punishment alone. If the crime is extremely serious the victim may suffer the effects of the crime for a long period of time. This is where *Restorative Justice* comes in.

The video documents a series of interviews that students of **Professors Rose-Marie Aikās's** CRIM102 class conducted with formerly incarcerated women about the principles of *Restorative Justice*. This part of the exhibition details the thoughts and experiences of women and students who have had contact with the criminal justice system.

The principles of *Restorative Justice* encourage connecting with victims to comfort them and help them overcome the harm that the offender's actions have brought into their lives. It helps victims to articulate the harm caused by the crime. One of the main principles of *Restorative Justice* is to give the offender the chance to communicate and talk with the victim to gain an understanding between them. This can potentially help both parties by not only allowing the victim to possibly gain more answers and an understanding of the perpetrator, but also allowing the offender to see what she did wrong and how her actions had caused immeasurable pain to the victim. *Restorative Justice* can also be used to prevent potential offenders from ruining their own lives by showing how their actions could negatively affect themselves as well as others.



PROFESSOR AIKĀS'S CRIMINAL JUSTICE  
STUDENTS INTERVIEW THE WOMEN OF  
HOUR CHILDREN FOR THEIR  
MULTIMEDIA PIECE ON RESTORATIVE  
JUSTICE IN THIS EXHIBIT



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**Student contributors for the Restorative Justice section of the exhibition:**

Dana Aharon

Paul M. Bacalan

Teresa D. Beltrani

Reda Bouzid

Laura Calderon

Chris Carrasco

Kaitlyn R. Creegan

Antonia N. Curcio

Niki Debernardo

Emperatriz Diaz

Michelle E. Diaz

Rafael M. Espinal

Chasidy Fernandez

Arturo J. Fierro

Alannah M. Flores

Robert Herasme

Rhmha Hussein

Suzana Jahovic

Carlos A. Juarez

Nicholas Kim

Kevanie McKenzie

Pearse P. Mcguire

Amanda G. Persaud

Victoria R. Pinamonti

Johnny Quach

Melisa Rendon

Jovanna I. Robinson

Durga Sharma

Sharon Stark

Timothy S. Tatom

Lev Urkin

Edwin Ventura

Roberto Zamora



QUEENSBOROUGH COMMUNITY  
COLLEGE CRIMINAL JUSTICE STUDENTS  
EXPLORE *RESTORATIVE JUSTICE* BY  
COMMUNICATING AND LISTENING TO  
OFFENDERS TO GAIN UNDERSTANDING.  
THIS PROCESS ALSO ALLOWS THE  
OFFENDER TO REFLECT



## Poetry:

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### Resisting Silence, Giving Voice

Poetry resists silence and gives voice to that which is unspeakable. These poems are by students from **Professor Jodie Childers** English 101 course and the Queensborough Creative Writing Club. In these poems, students express their thoughts and feelings about genocide, racism, war, trauma, and oppression. The students have researched historical and contemporary events and developed their own creative responses. Students have also written ekphrastic poems while reflecting on the paintings *With A Thread*, and *Interruption*, by Holocaust survivor, artist, and writer, Samuel Bak. As a result, the poetry reveals the artistic expression, personal reflection and academic research the students conducted on the horrors of various types of oppression.



*WITH A THREAD*, PAINTING BY  
THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR, ARTIST,  
AND WRITER, SAMUEL BAK

---

**Student Contributors:**

Yao Djifa Agoudavi

Ali Bhatti

Swaleha Bhula

Roshauna Bostwick

Laurine Pierre Derose

Anila Faizy

Carlos Fernandez

Jennifer Gaitan-Aldana

Rhmha Hussein

Sabrina Jaikaran

Renee King

Manjinder Singh



*INTERRUPTION*, PAINTING BY  
THE HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR, ARTIST, AND  
WRITER, SAMUEL BAK

# *An Exploration of Global Empathy:*

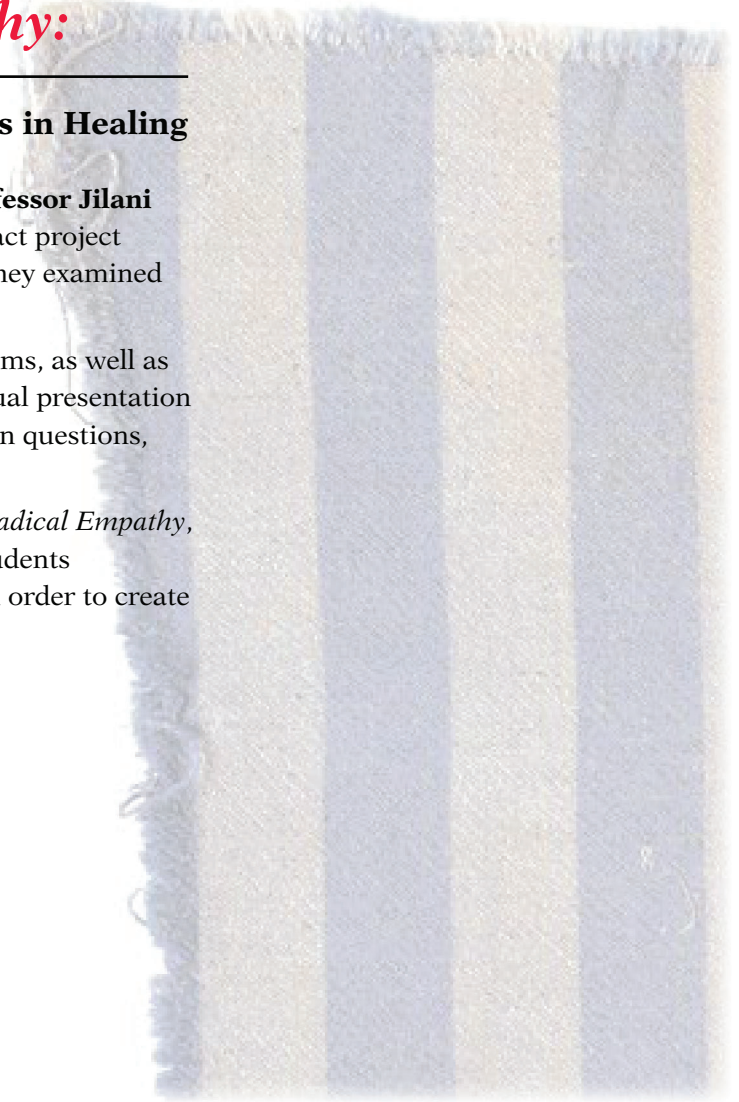
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## **How Recent Middle East Wars Can Teach Us Lessons in Healing**

**Santia Sanders, Fanny Anze, and Yoan Carrillo**, students in **Professor Jilani Warsi's** BE226 Academic Literacy class participated in a high-impact project exploring global empathy in relation to this NEH Grant Project. They examined global empathy in the context of Middle East conflicts.

This research project defines empathy, and also examines how victims, as well as perpetrators of violence, both promote and lack empathy. This visual presentation also chronicles how students explored their feelings about their own questions, which remained after exploring this topic.

The students also incorporated a TED talk, Dr. Samuel Richards' *Radical Empathy*, to both frame and explore these questions in explicit detail. The students encourage you to reflect on and ponder the questions they posed in order to create a better understanding of empathy in relation to mass atrocity.







DR. JILANI WARSI'S STUDENTS DOCUMENT GLOBAL EMPATHY THROUGH THE STUDY OF MIDDLE EAST CONFLICTS

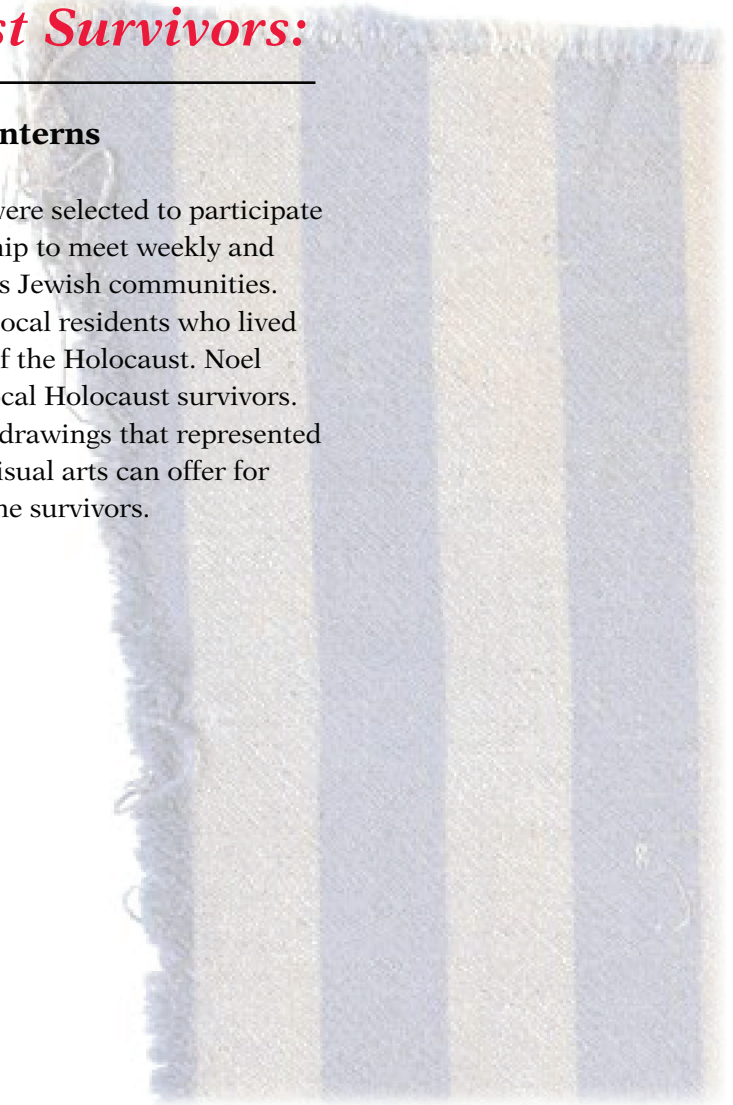


# *Visualizing the Lives of Holocaust Survivors:*

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## **Art from the Kupferberg Holocaust Center Student Interns**

**Professor Liz DiGiorgio's** students, **Noel Madera** and **Ela Illias**, were selected to participate in the Kupferberg Holocaust Research Center and Archives internship to meet weekly and examine the impact World War II had on residents living in Europe's Jewish communities. Through readings, videos, group discussions, and presentations by local residents who lived in Europe at the time, the students gained a strong understanding of the Holocaust. Noel and Ela used this knowledge to conduct intensive interviews with local Holocaust survivors. Through their experiences with the survivors, Noel and Ela created drawings that represented the lives of the Holocaust survivors, exploring the possibilities the visual arts can offer for learning, understanding, and empathizing with the experiences of the survivors.





KHCRA INTERNS AND ART & DESIGN STUDENTS NOEL MADERA AND ELA ILLIAS USED THEIR EXPOSURE TO GENOCIDE AND MASS ATROCITY TO INSPIRE ARTISTIC RESPONSES

# *La Memoria del Perejil*

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## The Postcard Project

The Postcard Project by **Scherezade Garcia** expresses the tragic history and resulting issues between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Garcia's public art project aims to provoke our memory with the intention of healing through the actions of telling and sharing. In late September and October, 1937, then President and dictator of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Leonidas Trujillo, ordered the execution of an estimated 15,000 Haitian men, women and children who lived on the border between the Dominican Republic and Haiti. Trujillo's order was nothing more than government sponsored genocide.

The conflict between Haitians and Dominicans has, however, a much longer history. The Dominican Republic was under Haitian occupation between 1822 and 1844. Although the Dominican Republic became independent from Haiti in 1844, aggressions between the two nations continued. A major conflict was over farmland, as Haiti's mountainous geographical environment led many Haitians to migrate to Dominican regions in order to pursue an agricultural life. This led to an uprising of Dominican peasants, which, in turn, sparked a government-sponsored genocide of Haitians who settled in Dominican regions.

The tragedy happened 75 years ago; nevertheless, the event is "tattooed" in the skins of both nations. The image of the postcards is made up of two identical faces, alluding to two sister nations, their histories intertwined. The faces are located in reference to the map of the island.



The artist, Scherezade Garcia, is a member of *Border of Lights*, which is a group of artists, activists, students and teachers who have come together to commemorate the massacre's legacy. She was born in the Dominican Republic and in 1986 moved to New York, where she attended the Parsons School of Design. She is a faculty member of Parsons The New School for Design. Her work frequently evokes memories of a faraway home and the hopes and dreams that accompany planting roots in a new land. Through the postcard project, she makes us think about what we know of the 1937 massacre or what we have been told about it.



SCHEREZADE GARCIA'S ART  
INSPIRES HEALING THROUGH  
"TELLING AND SHARING"



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Dr. Diane B. Call, President of Queensborough Community College

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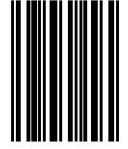
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HOLOCAUST RESOURCE CENTER  
AND ARCHIVES



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COMMUNITY COLLEGE

