

July 7, 2026 — Day One

8:30–9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00–9:15 am

Samantha Abramson, Executive Director | Sam Goldberg, Education Director

Welcome to the Conference

Introduction to the Nathan and Esther Pelz Holocaust Education Resource Center and Wisconsin Act 30.

9:15–10:15 am

Dr. Rebecca Erbelding, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Keynote: The US and the Refugee Crisis, 1938–1941

Many students ask: Why didn't Jews just leave? In the years prior to Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II, hundreds of thousands of refugees tried to escape Nazi-occupied territory. Many tried to come to the United States, but restrictive immigration laws, xenophobia, antisemitism, and security concerns stood in the way. This program will do a deep-dive into how immigration to the United States worked during the refugee crisis, and highlight some of the agencies—and average Americans—trying to help Jewish refugees, as well as resources to include this topic in your study of the Holocaust.

10:25–11:25 am

Ewa Schaller, American Friends of Yahud-In Unum

Local Worlds: Jewish Communities in Prewar Poland and Why They Matter in the Classroom

Understanding the Holocaust requires understanding the communities that existed before it. This session explores Jewish life in prewar Poland through focused local examples and testimony, highlighting the diversity, social structures, political life, and everyday realities of Jewish communities before 1939. Participants will gain practical strategies for using micro-history, primary sources, and community-based perspectives to help students grasp not only what was destroyed, but who and what was lost.

11:25 am–12:25 pm

Lunch

12:30–1:30 pm

Jodi Elowitz, Ohio Holocaust & Genocide Memorial & Education Commission

Art as Resistance During the Holocaust

Jewish resistance during the Holocaust took many forms. While armed resistance is often the most well-known, there were also powerful cultural and artistic efforts within ghettos and camps to document daily life under Nazi oppression. In this session, we will explore how artists used visual expression to protest, bear witness, and retain their humanity. Together, we will examine artwork created in ghettos and camps, learn about the artists behind these works, and discuss strategies for using art in the classroom to engage students and foster critical thinking.

1:40–2:40 pm

Doyle Stevick, Anne Frank Center

Otto Frank, Anne's Legacy, and the Struggle for a Positive Peace

The Holocaust did not occur in a vacuum. It was a confluence of some of the worst ideas in human history, including cultural intolerance, racial ideologies, and segregationism—all directed at the Jewish people. Otto Frank's extraordinary life spanned the era of German colonialism, the trenches of World War I, Auschwitz, the atom bomb, and even the moon landing. Reflecting on Otto's role as a survivor of the Holocaust and the steward of Anne Frank's legacy against the broad sweep of his lifetime provides a vantage point to think about how he maintained hope for the future, and how he believed Anne's diary, her story, and the Anne Frank House itself might contribute to a better world. This talk will explore how the educational projects of the Anne Frank House manifest these ideas and commitments, particularly in its peer education approach to the traveling exhibit program.

2:50–3:50 pm**Khatchig Mouradian, Columbia University****The David Atamian Journals: An Unparalleled Record of the Armenian Genocide**

David Atamian (1892, Behesni–1978, Arlington, Virginia) survived the Armenian Genocide and produced an unparalleled multi-volume journal of the early twentieth century. The manuscript spans more than 10,000 pages in thirteen volumes, covering his youth, the genocide, and the postwar period. He recorded arrests, deportation procedures, police corruption, disease, hunger, and daily survival strategies, often in real time. His postwar entries trace conditions and survivor networks in the Ottoman Empire. The journals are multilingual and include a wealth of photographs, reports, and verse. Atamian repeatedly reflects on loneliness, uncertainty, and the urgency of writing “while I still live,” presenting diary-keeping as an act of resistance and testimony. In this illustrated talk, Dr. Mouradian shows how the journals deepen our understanding of the late Ottoman era and shed light on the daily emotional world of deportees.

4:00–4:15 pm**Sam Goldberg, Education Director****Wrap-Up for the Day**

July 8, 2026 — Day Two

8:30–9:00 am

Breakfast

9:00–10:00 am

Daniel Magilow, University of Tennessee**Using Holocaust Photographs in the Classroom**

This workshop is designed for teachers who want practical guidance on using Holocaust photographs in the secondary school classroom. Photographs are often treated as transparent evidence of what happened, yet teaching with them raises complex historical, ethical, and pedagogical questions. For instance, what even counts as a 'Holocaust photograph'? What ethical challenges come with looking at and teaching disturbing images? And what functions did Holocaust photographs play during World War II—and after—beyond just providing evidence of crimes? By the end of the session, teachers will have a clearer framework for contextualizing and teaching Holocaust photographs in historically grounded, ethically responsible, and pedagogically effective ways.

10:10–11:10 am

Dr. Pamela Nadell, American University**Antisemitism, an American Tradition**

Award-winning author Pamela S. Nadell's new book *Antisemitism, An American Tradition* has been called the 'book the world needs now.' Nadell scrupulously investigates how the persistence of old ideas about 'evil Jews,' alongside new antisemitic conspiracy theories and lies, have circulated throughout American history. She reveals how hatred against Jews in America has continuously threaded its history, exposing that antisemitism in the United States is not an irregularity, but a tradition. In this presentation, Nadell covers themes from her book—winner of the National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies—and examines the antisemitism of our current moment.

11:20 am–12:15 pm

Dalilah Cohen & Samantha Abramson, J-Hub**J-Hub: An Institute for K–12 Jewish Resources**

A look at the Milwaukee Jewish Federation's new initiative for all things Jewish education. This session will take educators through part of a lesson on Jewish identity, introducing students to Jewish people outside of their role as victims of the Holocaust.

12:15–1:00 pm

Lunch

1:10–2:10 pm

Kizito Kalima, Peace Center for Forgiveness & Reconciliation**Genocide Awareness & Overcoming Adversity**

Kizito's session will share the cause and consequences of the 1994 Genocide in Rwanda, and his personal story of survival and resilience. He will share how he was able to rebuild his life after surviving the genocide.

2:20–3:20 pm

Mark Gudgel**Teaching about Genocide: Practice and Pragmatism When Approaching the World's Worst Crimes in the Classroom**

The path of least resistance does not pass through the world of teaching about genocide, atrocities, and human rights abuses, and yet legions of dedicated, passionate educators elect to do just that. This session will help educators assess the landscape of genocide education across the United States before taking a more localized, personal approach to developing sound pedagogy and best practice in a field in which firm footing can be difficult to find. Materials, time, genocide denial, and new considerations surrounding artificial intelligence will all be taken into consideration in this interactive session intended to help educators navigate the field of genocide education.

3:30–4:20 pm

Sam Goldberg, Education Director

Teaching Using HERC and Echoes & Reflections Materials

Ready-made lesson plans from experts in the field, available at your fingertips. This session will showcase HERC and Echoes & Reflections resources that can help you make the most of your time teaching about the Holocaust.

4:20–4:35 pm

HERC Staff

Closing