



THE OLGA LENGYEL INSTITUTE FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS (TOLI)



2020

Annual Review of Programs

THE OLGA LENGYEL INSTITUTE FOR HOLOCAUST STUDIES AND HUMAN RIGHTS (TOLI)

2020 ANNUAL REVIEW OF PROGRAMS

PROMOTING EDUCATION AND BUILDING COMMUNITY DURING THE PANDEMIC

2020 brought unprecedented challenges to educators and, therefore, to TOLI. Teachers across the United States and Europe were asked to rethink their teaching and to find innovative ways to engage their students. Similarly, professional development organizations such as ours needed to find new and innovative ways to meet the needs of teachers.

TOLI's Board of Directors and faculty are proud of our efforts to adjust our programming and find creative new methods of working with our participants. While teachers new to TOLI met exclusively through online seminars, this format allowed us to bring people together in many new digital environments. We are pleased to share our work with you here.

"My TOLI experience changed my life in a deep, personal, and meaningful way. TOLI also gave me valuable strategies that I use regularly. I teach all of my subjects from a social justice perspective. I hold the promise I made to [Holocaust survivor] Irving Roth close to my heart at all times."

-Angie Holzberg, participant in the TOLI seminar in New York City

TOLI PROGRAMS IN THE UNITED STATES

The pandemic has led to unprecedented challenges for teachers and students. At TOLI we have done our utmost to respond by supporting teachers as they seek innovative ways to teach about the Holocaust and to further their own professional development during this time. To do this, TOLI U.S. leaders Sondra Perl, Jennifer Lemberg, and Wendy Warren created new programs that offered opportunities for learning as well as for community-building. We also found creative ways to offer online versions of our seminars that would be meaningful and engaging. Throughout, we worked closely with the leaders of our satellite seminars to offer guidance and insight as they worked to adapt their seminar plans. Below are highlights of TOLI's activities in 2020.

NEW IN 2020 - 2021

Virtual Programs Offered to the Entire TOLI Network

To strengthen our network and to ensure that TOLI continued to be a source of inspiration and sustenance to the teachers in our programs, we launched a new series of online programs. These events were made available to everyone in our teacher network and have drawn strong attendance from members of every cohort that has been to NYC along with many teachers from the satellite seminars. They offered new opportunities for teachers to gather and learn together with their colleagues, contributing to a sense of cohesion and connection. Events have featured talks by Holocaust survivors, scholars and experts as well as film screenings and presentations on innovative resources for teachers.

Our offerings included:

- **April:** Yom HaShoah observance: an evening with Holocaust Survivor Irving Roth
- **May:** Launch of "TOLI Writes" website (see below for more information)

- **July:** Conversation with Murry Sidlin and Alexandra Zapruder about *Defiant Requiem* (film made available in advance)
- **September:** Focus on Antisemitism with Ellen Kennedy, Executive Director of *World Without Genocide*
- **October:** Virtual Reunion for all participants from the annual seminar in New York City
- **November:** An evening with Retro Report: exploring conspiracy theories in the US plus Q&A with documentary film producers and directors
- **December:** Film screening and discussion of *Who Will Write Our History*

Holocaust survivor Irving Roth speaks at a TOLI webinar in April in observance of Yom HaShoah. Participants were asked to light two candles.

Photo © Lacy Watson, leader of the TOLI seminar in Montana



Launch of New Website, “TOLI Writes”

In May of 2020 we launched a new website to provide TOLI teachers with a space to write and share about their professional experiences. More than 100 teachers signed up within a month. Writing prompts offered suggestions about what to write about. In May, we conducted a book group discussion on the site. At various points over the past year, we have added new prompts and engaged in continued discussion.

TOLI Talks Virtual Workshops

This new program features 45-minute video workshops created by TOLI satellite leaders that focus on and showcase one aspect of the work they do in their satellites. The videos can be used by Holocaust educators and other visitors to TOLI’s website as well as by other satellite leaders in their 2021 satellite programs. We are currently creating a new page on our website to host these workshops and to highlight some of our other existing video resources.

The new “TOLI Writes” website has offered a space for shared learning and community building during the pandemic.

The screenshot shows the TOLI website interface. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the TOLI logo on the left, the text "Welcome back, Jen" in the center, and navigation links for "Forums", "Profile", and "Logout" on the right. Below the header is a light blue content area with a white border. It starts with a heading: "WELCOME TO 'OLGA'S VIRTUAL TABLE' WHERE WE ARE ALL READERS AND WRITERS AROUND THE TABLE". The main text reads: "Welcome to our new website, a virtual space for 'Olga's Table,' where the TOLI community, near and far, will come together to reflect and grow through reading and writing." It then states: "TOLI Writes is a space for all TOLI educators to write:" followed by a bulleted list: "• To the times in which we are living", "• To ourselves and our uncertainties", and "• With one another in community and collaboration". The text continues: "It is a place to inquire into our own personal experiences during this most unusual time in our world. It is a private spot to connect with others through meaningful dialogue. It is a destination we visit when we need to refresh our souls." It then says: "New prompts will be posted every few weeks and one TOLI educator will be reading and responding to many of the posts." Below that, it says: "TOLI Reads is a space for all TOLI educators to share responses to books we choose to read together. It will be led by different members of TOLI who will be there to guide the reading and responding. Reading group announcements will be sent via the TOLI listserv." The text concludes with: "Visit often, not just to read and write, but to engage with and respond to your colleagues in the TOLI network." and "Click on 'Forums' to begin!". At the bottom of the content area, there are small links for "FORUMS | PROFILE | LOGOUT". The footer of the website is dark blue and contains the full name of the institute, its address (58 EAST 79 STREET — NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10075), phone number ((212) 249-5384), and email address (INFO@TOLINSTITUTE.ORG). The TOLI logo is also present in the bottom right corner of the footer.

Professional Development for Satellite Leaders

Responding to our understanding that leaders of the satellite programs look to TOLI for ongoing professional development, we offered two new programs in 2020; the first was a virtual reunion where they could gather together to share stories about teaching during the pandemic and discuss plans for their satellite seminars. The other was a book study with weekly meetings in July that focused on contemporary social justice questions inspired by protests that took place in the U.S. this summer.

Formation of an Advisory Team

Recognizing that the challenges of the pandemic would require innovative thinking, Sondra Perl, Jennifer Lemberg, and Wendy Warren invited seven TOLI teachers, all experienced leaders and all facilitators of a TOLI satellite seminar, to help conceive of, organize, and co-lead many of the new programs we offered in 2020.

THE NEW YORK CITY SEMINAR

In order to continue the work of the seminar in NYC, starting in September (following online



TOLI faculty and participants in the NYC summer seminar met monthly on Zoom to share best practices from their classrooms across the United States. Several virtual social events also helped to promote community building among the group.

introductions and book discussions held in the spring and summer of 2020) we held monthly meetings with accepted participants from the 2020 cohort. Led by Sondra Perl and Jennifer Lemberg along with our colleague Alice Braziller, these sessions will continue through May of 2021 and offer participants a way to learn from each other about their best practices in Holocaust education. As part of their presentations, participants upload associated documents and curriculum materials to a Google classroom created for this purpose. In addition to the meetings, we have held several virtual social events aimed at building community and cohesion among this group.

THE SATELLITE SEMINARS

In addition to offering virtual programs in the summer of 2020, a number of TOLI satellites have continued their work into the school year. Others have taken creative approaches to keeping accepted participants engaged until launching more officially in the summer of 2021. Starting in the fall of 2020, Sondra Perl, Jennifer Lemberg, and Wendy Warren each presented separately at meetings of the satellite in Virginia. In October, Sondra Perl led a workshop based on her book for the Wisconsin satellite.

The flexibility and variety demonstrated by the work of the satellite seminars during the pandemic (and at a time of great political and social uncertainty) helps to showcase some of TOLI's best attributes: recognizing the needs of teachers, collaborating well with other institutions, and developing new approaches appropriate to the demands of teaching a difficult subject. Below are some highlights from these programs.

Arizona – A small group of participants met via Zoom every two weeks in June and July to read and discuss Olga Lengyel’s *Five Chimneys* and Viktor Frankl’s *Man’s Search for Meaning*. Teachers from this program also joined the TOLI-wide screening and discussion of *Defiant Requiem*. Participants built relationships that helped them to navigate the challenges of the present moment, the 2020-21 school year and prepare for next summer’s inaugural seminar in Arizona.

California – Because one of the leaders of this seminar has served as her district’s Technology Coach, this team was able to quickly pull together TOLI’s first full seminar held completely online. Instead of its usual week-long format, the seminar ran from May 28th-July 13th. Participants heard from Holocaust survivors and scholars, a representative from the Sousa Mendes Foundation, and a panel comprised of children of survivors. Other speakers presented on the Rwandan genocide and the Secret War in Laos, the Hmong American community, the history of Japanese internment in the U.S., and refugees and immigration. Participants included teachers from California, Idaho, Delaware, New Jersey, and North Carolina.

Maryland - The co-directors invited all teachers accepted into the Maryland summer satellite to join the 2020 Belfer Conference at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). The participants met via Zoom in advance of the conference, and after each of the two conference days, participants again met via Zoom to debrief what they had learned. Ultimately, the group decided to continue to meet as a group during the school year. This new program will provide each participant with a book of their choice, which they will read and précis for the group.

Michigan – The co-leaders of this seminar offered a series of online workshops for participants to explore topics in Holocaust education that offered continuity and allowed teachers to deepen their

knowledge, to work with TOLI leaders, and to strengthen connections through a collaborative learning process.

Minnesota - Educators who had applied to the Minnesota summer seminar were offered the opportunity to attend the 2020 Belfer Conference at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). They, along with the leaders of the MN seminar, attended both days of the conference, and debriefed together after each day's sessions.

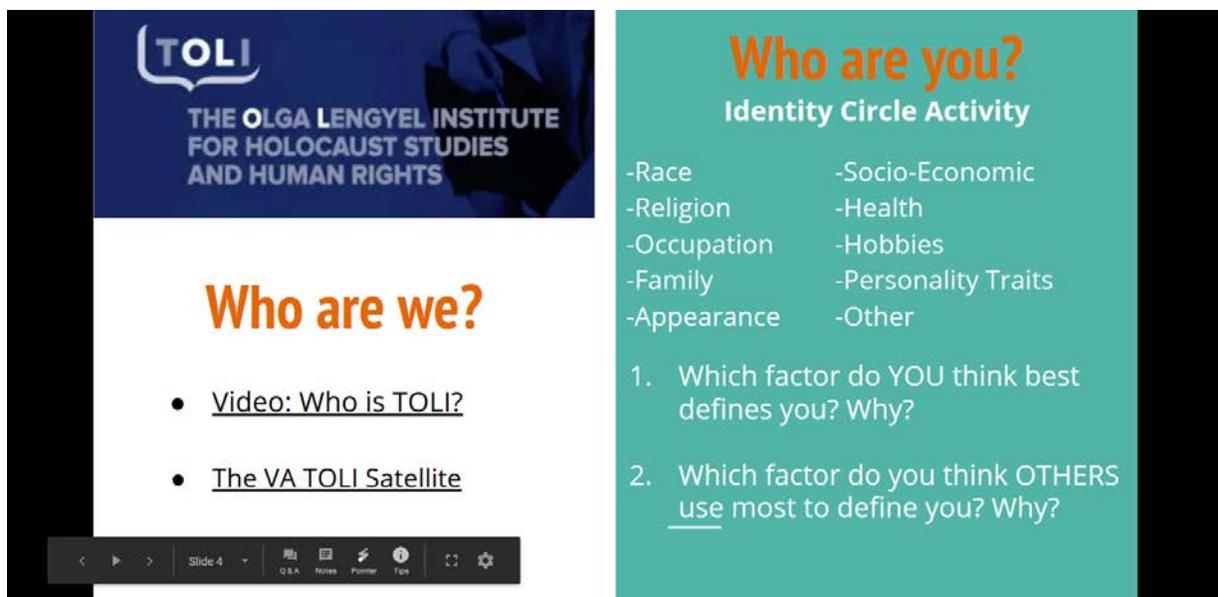
Mississippi – Educators registered for the 2020 seminar participated in a series of virtual sessions with teachers from New York, Massachusetts, Texas, and Alabama joining teachers from Mississippi. This group met throughout the month of June. The immediate impact of the book study was clear, as a few “spin-off” projects immediately developed, with participating teachers leading similar programs in their own schools and communities.

New Mexico – As they shifted from a 5-day in-person to a 3-day virtual seminar, the leaders in NM worked to maximize the benefits of online learning with a clear and intentional focus. Before meeting for the first session, the 19 participants were asked to watch several films. Speakers included Sheryl Ochayon of Yad Vashem and Holocaust survivor Gita Cycowicz. In November, 96 teachers, parents and students gathered to listen to Gita tell her story; based on the impact of her testimony, Gita was invited to speak with the entire TOLI network in February of 2021.

North Carolina – After the seminar leaders held an inquiry-based seminar in July which they intended to last for one week (as with a usual seminar), the participating teachers requested to extend their work through monthly meetings scheduled through December.

Oklahoma - Teachers gathered in early November, some face-to-face and some on Zoom, to share a socially distant lunch and enjoy getting to know one another. This group will be joined by others for the first full TOLI satellite seminar in Oklahoma in summer of 2021

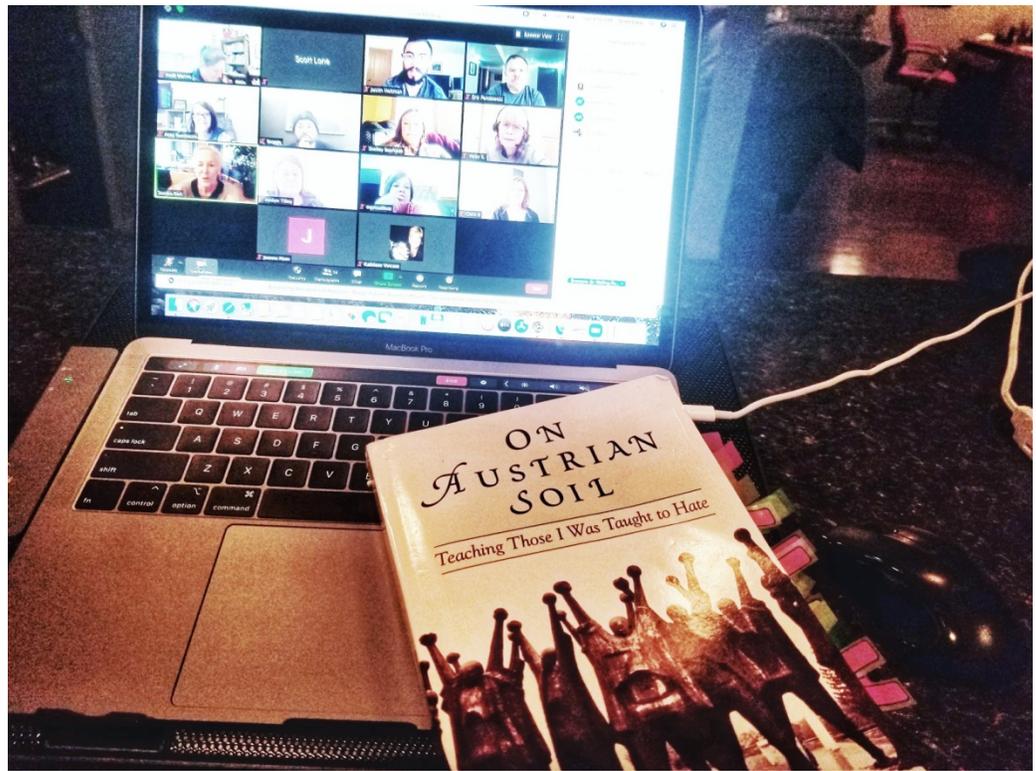
Virginia - In October, participating teachers met with Virginia satellite leaders to kick off a series of monthly meetings leading up to the first full TOLI Virginia seminar in June of 2021. At this first meeting, the group was introduced to TOLI and the vision of Olga Lengyel.



Welcoming participants to the online seminar in Virginia.

Wisconsin - In October, Wisconsin teachers continued their book study, begun in August with Olga Lengyel's *Five Chimneys: A Woman Survivor's True Story of Auschwitz*, by reading and then meeting with TOLI Director Sondra Perl to discuss her book, *On Austrian Soil: Teaching Those I Was Taught to Hate*. Another session is scheduled for the winter of 2021.

In Wisconsin, participating teachers joined in a study of TOLI Director Sondra Perl's book, *On Austrian Soil: Teaching Those I was Taught to Hate*.



Satellites Scheduled for 2021

Currently we have fourteen satellite seminars scheduled for the summer of 2021. We are keeping a close watch on current conditions and each site is planning accordingly for the possibilities of in-person or virtual learning. We recently updated our satellite seminar website page in order to make it easier for potential applicants to search and review all seminar options.

U.S. MINI GRANTS

Due to the pandemic, all scheduled mini-grant projects in the United States were put on hold. We look forward to resuming these programs as soon as possible and to thinking creatively about other opportunities for grant-funded projects.

CONFERENCES AND PUBLICATIONS

National and regional conference presentations

With Sandy Pope, satellite seminar leader in Maryland and a member of TOLI's new Advisory Team, Jennifer Lemberg co-chaired a panel at the **National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)**. The panel featured three TOLI teachers who are also contributors to the book she and Sandy are co-editing. Jennifer and Sandy also presented a live book talk session at the College and University Faculty Assembly (CUFA) meeting of the **National Council of the Social Studies (NCSS)**. In their talk they shared findings from their book manuscript currently in contract with Teachers College Press and scheduled to be co-published by the National Writing Project.

TOLI co-hosted an event with **Mass Humanities** in November. This program for teachers was co-hosted by our Mass Humanities grants officer, TOLI satellite leader Cara Crandall, and Jennifer Lemberg, and featured a film about a local Holocaust survivor.

Publications

Jennifer Lemberg edited and co-wrote an article about TOLI's work in Europe, "Holocaust Education in Europe: Snapshots from Austria, Romania, and Poland" along with TOLI leaders Nadine Ulsess-Schurda (Austria) Oana Nestian-Sandu (Romania) and Katarzyna Laziuk (Poland) for the Spring issue of *Prism: An Interdisciplinary Journal for Holocaust Educators*.

Jennifer's chapter, "Teaching Contemporary Jewish American Holocaust Literature: Memory, 'Fatigue,' and Narratives of Post-Holocaust Return" was included in *Teaching Jewish American Literature*, published by the Modern Language Association of America.

TOLI PROGRAMS IN EUROPE

SEMINARS

Portugal - The second seminar offered by TOLI to teachers in Portugal took place in Porto on February 23–26, 2020 and was organized in partnership with Memoshoà and the Jewish Community of Porto/Israelite Community of Porto. In addition to interactions with survivors, small-group work with their fellow participants, and lectures from internationally renowned speakers, participants also had the opportunity to work together to develop creative projects that would allow them to put into practice the knowledge they gained during the seminar.

Educators participate in small-group discussion during an in-person seminar in Portugal. This program was able to hold in-person meetings prior to the shutdowns.



Poland - An 8-week online seminar for 40 Polish teachers took place in September–October 2020 and focused on teaching about the Holocaust and human rights through art. This seminar, the third TOLI seminar for Polish teachers, was organized by The Olga Lengyel Institute (TOLI) in partnership with POLIN – Museum of the History of Polish Jews, Yad Vashem, and Big Picture Association. Participants explored the history of the Holocaust through painting, photography, literature, comics, and graphic art.

Romania and Republic of Moldova - A 10-week online seminar for 37 teachers from Romania and Republic of Moldova took place in October-December 2020. The online format offered the opportunity to bring together teachers from the two countries who speak the same language and share an intertwined history. Over the course of the seminar, participants attended lectures by and engaged in group discussion with survivors, professors, researchers, and other Holocaust educators.

Lithuania - An 8-week online seminar for 38 Lithuanian teachers took place in October–November 2020. The seminar offered a balanced approach between cognitive and emotional elements, information about the horrors of the Holocaust and information about the life of Jewish people before and after the Holocaust, and reflection and action.



Participants in the TOLI seminar in Ukraine meet over Zoom.

Ukraine - An intensive 4-week online seminar for 30 Ukrainian teachers took place in October–November 2020. Teachers had the opportunity to learn from an international team of lecturers and trainers, listen to survivor testimony, and think creatively and collaboratively about how to teach the Holocaust and human rights.

Transnational Seminar - An 11-week online seminar for 40 teachers from 15 European countries (Austria, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Spain, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine) took place in September–December 2020. This was TOLI’s first transnational seminar for European teachers. Experts from 7 countries were invited as guest speakers, including Holocaust survivor Assia Raberman, Harvard instructor and director of the FXB Center for Health and Human Rights’ Roma Program Magda Matache, and Romanian Ambassador to Israel Radu Ioanid (former Director of the International Archives at the USHMM). In one of the more memorable activities, participants provided a description of the history of the Jewish community in their town/region. This resulted in a beautiful collection of presentations, with texts, photos, and personal stories related to these communities.

The engagement required from teachers during the online seminars was 2-3 hours per week (except for the Ukrainian seminar, which was more intensive and required about 5-6 hours of engagement per week). The methods used consisted of both synchronous and asynchronous activities such as: webinars, discussion forums, collaborative work, videos, individual and group assignments, readings, reflections, etc. Participants created an account on the seminar platform, which allowed them to access the materials and to communicate and collaborate with the other participants not only during the Zoom meetings, but in between the live sessions as well. All participants were given the opportunity to hear testimony from Assia Raberman, a Holocaust survivor and the aunt of TOLI President Mark Berez.

PILOT PROGRAM FOR TOLI ALUMNI

Besides the seminars, this year we launched a pilot program for TOLI alumni. Based on a survey aimed to identify the professional development needs of Romanian teachers, who represent the largest group of

TOLI alumni in Europe so far (8 seminars have been organized in Romania until now), we organized three webinars, giving teachers the opportunity to work together, share their teaching practices, discuss adaptations to online teaching, and find various ways to collaborate. This program will continue on a yearly basis, with regular online meetings between TOLI alumni. In 2021 the program will be extended to Bulgaria as well.

Seminars Planned for 2021

In 2021, seminars will be held in Poland, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Italy, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Spain. There will also be an international conference hosted in Poland.

MINI GRANTS

Over 100 mini-grant projects were approved in Europe. Teachers did an amazing job adapting their projects to an online environment while finding ways to keep their students interested in this subject until it will be possible to meet in-person and visit the sites they were unable to visit virtually.