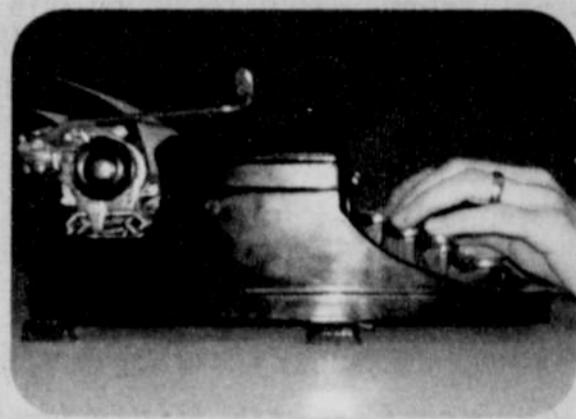


Grief Revisited

Remembering the Holocaust from a queer perspective

I first visited the Oregon Holocaust Memorial in Portland's Washington Park last month in honor of *Yom HaShoah*, Holocaust Remembrance Day. Feeling part of a small minority as a Jew in Oregon, I was surprised to learn of its existence. But what surprised me more was the memorial's acknowledgment of the often-disregarded gays and lesbians killed in the Holocaust.

As a child I attended eight years of private Hebrew day school where the Holocaust was more than a subject covered in history class. It was the basis of our mission statement—why we were lucky to be alive and getting a Jewish education at all. Most of my classmates had grandparents who escaped Europe just as Hitler and the Nazi party gained power in the 1930s. Some had ancestors who escaped Russia in the late 19th century where they were threatened by pogroms. A day did not pass when we weren't reminded of their losses and our privilege.



Out of My Mind

BY MALKA GEFFEN

inspection I saw sculptures of a broken pair of glasses, a doll, a violin and an empty, overturned suitcase. They lie scattered about to represent the haste in which Nazi officers rounded up people. Their unobtrusive placement represents the ease with which people living in European communities could ignore the plight of their neighbors.

The alternating brick pattern approach to the concave wall resembles the train tracks that brought millions of people to the death camps. The wall itself begins with a solemn and brief history of the Nazi genocide and the relevance of the handful of survivors in Oregon and Southwest Washington. I was moved by the inclusiveness of the summary, which lists so many of the groups affected by the Holocaust. "Defeated in WWI, Germany aimed to undo what it saw as the humiliation of its surrender. But first it turned to internal enemies whom the Nazi state believed menaced its social and biological purity: socialists, communists and labor

leaders; liberals and intellectuals; homosexuals and nonconformists; gypsies and Jehovah's Witnesses."

Continuing to the right, I read the plaques of statements by survivors, such as "Never will I forget the smell of Auschwitz." I thought I'd stay stolid because I'd listened to survivors tell their stories firsthand when I was young. But the numbness with which I've learned to face the details of the Holocaust—while watching *Schindler's List* and visiting Anne Frank's house and the remains of Auschwitz—melted into emotion when I read one particular plaque: "As I looked back, my mother turned her face to avoid mine and my little sister gave me a frail and knowing wave."

According to Reed, the majority of Holocaust survivors in Oregon are of Jewish heritage. He reminded me that survivors won't be around much longer and said he wants to locate gay and lesbian survivors in Oregon, or survivors who were connected to the gay community at that time, and document their stories. He said he hopes the gay community will become more supportive of the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center, which fully funds the Holocaust Memorial and its upkeep. Reed added, "It's the gay community's memorial as much as it is everyone else's." ☐

For more information about the OREGON HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL visit ohrc.pacificu.edu/memorial or contact the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center at 503-352-2930.

Staff Writer MALKA GEFFEN has plenty of room in her head. Fill it by e-mailing malka@justout.com.



The Oregon Holocaust Memorial recognizes homosexuals among the millions who perished.

I did not come out until many years after my formal education about World War II and the Holocaust ended. It evolved in my consciousness that the Holocaust claimed more lives than 6 million Jews. At some point I became aware that, similar to the yellow Star of David that Jews were required to wear, homosexuals had to wear a pink triangle. This is a reclaimed symbol widely used today by queer organizations and activists.

In 1999 I saw the U.S. premiere of the German film *Aimee and Jaguar* at the San Francisco International Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. It beautifully portrays the true-story relationship between a Jewish lesbian and a Nazi general's wife. The tears I shed after seeing that film were my first in memoriam of the members of my sexual minorities community who perished.

Jump eight years to a recent Portland Area Business Association meeting, where my boss met Chris Reed, an executive board member of the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center. He is a straight business owner who joined PABA with his gay best friend two years ago. Reed became involved with the resource center after filming the memorial's dedication for public access television in 2004. When I spoke with him before my visit he said, "Our recognition of the gay community sets us apart nationally from other memorials."

Washington Park is gorgeous, rain or shine, so the walk to the monument from the parking lot did not prepare me for the sadness every inch of the memorial bears. I almost disregarded objects on a nearby bench and the path to the memorial wall as trash or things left behind by previous visitors. Upon closer



2007 Just Out Amateur Photo Contest

It is once again time for the Just Out Amateur Photo Contest. As with last year, the winning photos and accompanying profiles will be featured in the June 15 Pride issue of Just Out. This issue will be distributed from our booth at the Portland Pride Waterfront Festival.

This year, the rewards and the prizes are even better! The contest will award a great PACIFIC NORTHWEST WEEKEND GETAWAY to one winner in each of the following five categories:

- People
- Pets
- Travel
- Environment
- Abstract

In addition to the five grand prize winners, honorable mentions will be awarded for Just Out staff favorites. And, all entries will be on display at Q Center, throughout the month of July.

All entries must be received at the Just Out office no later than May 29.

Photos may be mailed to:

P.O. Box 14400,
Portland, OR 97293-0400,

or dropped off at:

123 NE Third Ave., Suite 465.

NO ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS WILL BE ACCEPTED. The minimum size is 4 inches by 6 inches, with no maximum size requirements.

For more information visit www.justout.com.

Great Prizes!
Win a PACIFIC NW
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GETAWAY!

Entries Due May 29.