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|  | Speak Up-KōrerotiaHolocaust awareness21 October 2020 |
| Male | This programme was first broadcast on Canterbury’s community access radio station Plains FM 96.9 and was made with the assistance of New Zealand on Air. |
| Female | Coming up next conversations on human rights with “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”, here on Plains FM. |
|  Sally | E ngā mana, E ngā reo, E ngā hau e whāTēnā koutou katoaNau mai ki tēnei hōtaka: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. Tune in as our guests “Speak Up”, sharing their unique and powerful experiences and opinions and may you also be inspired to “Speak Up” when the moment is right.Nau mai ki te hōtaka tika tangata: “Speak Up” – “Kōrerotia”. This is Sally Carlton your host. So it’s 2020, 75 years since the end of World War II and with it the liberation of the Nazi death camps. Quite interestingly, I feel like there has been very little about this this year given what has been going on and I have to say I was very embarrassed and shocked at myself to realise that I had missed the anniversary of the 75 years in May this year. So I guess that’s part of what we’re going to be talking about now is what’s been going on with the current state of affairs and how this is impacting on the past. Today we’re going to be talking about Holocaust awareness - and the flip side of that: Holocaust non-awareness, I suppose, or even denial. So it’s a hugely important topic, one that we haven’t yet broached on Speak Up – Kōrerotia, so it is good to have with us two guests today. Kris Clancy from the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand and Giacomo Lichtner, who is Associate Professor at the Victoria University of Wellington. If you guys could both introduce yourselves, tell a little bit about your work and why you are engaged in the panel today.  |
| Kris | My name is Kris Clancy, I’m the Education Director. The reason why I do I do the work is the importance of it. I was a history teacher in the United States and I saw that my students often would never make the connections of history to today because too often we teach history as being an event that’s done and over with, that there’s no lasting effects. And yes, it’s 75 years ago that the camps were liberated but there are still survivors alive today that are living with the scars of those events and there are second and third generations that get passed down with those memories and that informs and shapes everything that they do. It informs and shapes how we react as a society to things today that are going on.  |
| Giacomo | Tēnā koe Sally, kia ora Kris and tēnā koutou to the listeners. So I am, as you said, an Associate Professor of History at Victory University of Wellington. I teach Holocaust history here, also propaganda and I’m a specialist in memory and representation, in particular film representation of what we might call the ‘long Second World War’, so the Holocaust but also the kind of run up to the Second World War which really, in Europe, includes the whole of the inter-war period from the rise of fascism and Nazism onwards. And I have been involved also with the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand for a few years serving on its board, also really interested in the public commemoration and awareness and perception of the Holocaust.  |
| Sally | So given that we are talking about ‘what is the Holocaust’, it might be great just to start off with what is the Holocaust? And obviously that is a massive question.  |
| Kris | That is a very big question because, I mean, how do you define the timing of the Holocaust, as well? As Giacomo mentioned, teaching, you know, the rise of fascism - a lot of historians could point to that as being the start of it. The rise of anti-Semitism in Europe and things like that. In general, most people would say the Holocaust is the mass murder of over 6 million Jews by Nazi Germany and collaborators, not just in camps - which is what most people know - but also through starvation in ghettos and killing fields in Eastern Europe.  |
| Giacomo | So it’s important to understand the Holocaust as this sort of growth that starts with disenfranchisement in the ‘30s in Europe and then discrimination and persecution and physical persecution, all the way to extermination. And whilst historians referred to the Holocaust as the general side of European Jews, it’s also important to understand more broadly in a context in which other groups were targeted by the Nazis and the collaborators either for extermination, groups like the Roma and Gypsies and the disabled, all for persecution on the basis of ethnicity, political ideas, religious beliefs or sexual orientation.  |
| Sally | Do we have some kind of stats? So you’ve mentioned 6 million Jews. What are the kind of the total numbers there as well?  |
| Giacomo | These are estimates, including the 6 million. Different historians come up with different ranges. 6 million in relation to Jews comes from the closest figures by Lucy Dawidowicz writing in the ‘70s or ‘80s, I can’t quite recall, and she comes up with a really granular figure of 5,933,900 people based on pre-war census records, the pre-war records. Wolfgang Benz more recently puts it in a much broader range between 5.3 and 6.2 but now 6 million has become a sort of combination. The other group… the largest other group was actually probably Soviet POWs who were treated not like other POWs because of the Nazi racism towards Slavs and their ideological aversion towards communists. And so about 3.3 million Soviet POWs died in captivity out of a total 5.7 million. So that’s a huge percentage, especially if you compare it to how many casualties there were amongst British or American POWs. Then there’s non-Jewish Polish civilians also persecuted widely in a less organised way, in a less systematic way, but nevertheless very widely and it’s about 1.9 million of those civilians of Polish nationality but not Jewish. Researchers in Washington at the US Holocaust Memorial Museum estimate about 100,000 gay men arrested in Germany and the occupied countries. About 5,000 to 15,000 of those died in concentration camps. 220,000 Roma or Romani - commonly and perhaps inaccurately referred to as Gypsies - that’s about a quarter of the entire population in Europe. They were gassed; they were the other group to be gassed alongside Jews. And then of course there’s 200,000 victims of the T4 programmes normally referred to as the euthanasia campaigns. Of course it is nothing to do with euthanasia, they’re murder campaigns that the Nazi’s carried out against both German and Polish disabled, both adults and children. |
| Sally | Yes, the numbers are really staggering, aren’t they.  |
| Giacomo | They are.  |
| Kris | It’s incomprehensible.  |
| Sally | Yes, it is.  |
| Kris | To understand 6,200,000, 1.5 million. The numbers are just incomprehensible to the human mind.  |
| Sally | We’ve recently had in Christchurch the 1.5 million buttons exhibition and you think 1.5 million, that’s such a huge number but I think the idea behind the buttons being that actually you can see that kind of tangible, visual part of it. Trying to make it that little bit more comprehensible.  |
| Giacomo | Yes, I think you’re absolutely right, Sally. The choice of the buttons as an object was inspired by the Moriah School children and their teachers because they carried individuality. Each button is different but while also conveying the mass and the collectivity. I think compared to another really impressive example in the US - I think Kris will be familiar with this - the paperclips. They collected 6 million paperclips and while that really conveyed the volume, it probably missed something in terms of individuality because paper clips are all the same.  |
| Kris | One of the things about memorialising the Holocaust and genocide in general is balancing the understanding of the gravity and largeness of it along with the individual stories of the people involved. And too often when we’re teaching it, we tend to focus on the facts that are very sterile and barren because it can be very difficult and oftentimes too hard to do those individual stories because they become so personal to us, even if we aren’t related to it at all.  |
| Sally | But yet so important in terms of actually giving a face and a story. I guess we’re thinking about what’s been going on this year as well to mark - or not - the 75th anniversary. Was there much that took place? I know there were things that were planned that obviously had to be cancelled or at least toned down a lot and what has the impact of that been on not being able to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of the war and the end of the death camps as had been anticipated or planned?  |
| Kris | There was a lot planned. The big events would have been in May with VE Day. It was supposed to be in Canada this year to bring together all of the European nations as well as all of the Allied nations in America, Australia, Canada, places like that, to honour not just the liberation of the camps but also the liberation of Europe. Covid has changed everything when it comes to how we commemorated it this year, it was a lot more subdued and online was a lot of the commemorations that were done. Yom HaShoah - which is the Holocaust Remembrance Day for Israel which tends to fall in the April/May area because it follows the Jewish calendar - we did a video montage and put that out online as our commemoration. I would say that how Covid affected everything, it kind of pushed everything to the side because that became the focus of how do we respond to this international crisis of this disease. But for those that are still around that are survivors, it also brought back a lot of personal memories of what they went through. Everyone knows Anne Frank being locked up for two years and her hiding place in the attic in Amsterdam, and a lot of people compared lockdown to what she went through and there is no comparison. Understanding what those people went through if they were in hiding or if they were in a ghetto, it just doesn’t compare to what we went through. But it did bring back a lot of memories for those people that went through it about how horrible those times were. So I think that’s something we have to look at how we’re going to deal with in the future as well as this continues to go on.  |
| Sally | The mental health implications.  |
| Kris | Yeah.  |
| Sally | Giacomo, you mentioned right at the beginning when you were introducing the Holocaust, the idea that looking at the rise of fascism as being part of it and the fact that it went from, you know, a few comments to laws being enacted to persecution on a great scale and eventually ending up in the death camps. And I think that this is a theme that we will take through into our conversation. It’s not a snap of a fingers thing that you end up with the genocide, it is a progression. And as we’re talking about Holocaust awareness and how important it is that people have this awareness that a large part of why the Holocaust was enabled was because people did not put up their hands and say actually this is not the right thing to do. So I think we might have our first song but we will bear that in mind as we move forward. Being a bystander versus being an upstander and the importance of taking on that moral responsibility. Giacomo, you have chosen our first song for us which is ‘Zog nit keyn mol’, I may have pronounced that wrong, sorry.  |
| Giacomo | That’s pretty good, good Yiddish, well done. ‘Zog nit keyn mol’ is really in English ‘Never Say’. It is also known as the Partizaner Hymn or the Hymn of the Partisans. Normally if you search it up you will see it is referred to as the Song of the Warsaw Ghetto but in fact it was written in Vilna Ghetto in Lithuania, another one of the major ghettos of Eastern Europe, the major Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. I chose it partly because it’s a powerful song about resistance but its lyrics are not triumphant, they really encapsulate well the desperate situation of those Jews in Eastern Europe who attempted to resist Nazism and Nazi persecution.Historically there has been a lot of discussion, a lot of scholarship, around Jewish resistance and what seems like the absence of Jewish resistance or Jewish passivity. In fact, Jewish resistance was everywhere. Quite often physical armed resistance but more often in all sorts of other ways that I wouldn’t describe as passive resistance like even just trying to maintain dignity in the face of dehumanisation. So this song really encapsulates that, I think, and it’s become an important song. But I chose a version, Sally, that was sang by Paul Robeson, the African American Civil Rights activist. While it’s not quite the most authentic version, I really like the story behind it that he decided to use it as the encore in his 1949 concert in Moscow. It was a very important, politically very significant concert. He had gone there and found that many Jewish intellectuals that he had become friends with during his socialist activism in the 1930s and ‘40s had been imprisoned by Stalin and actually were awaiting execution. And that evening at the concert that the Tchaikovsky Theatre he sang this song as his encore and it was a powerful statement against the Stalinist purges but also, I think, a really wonderful and really resonant statement about the solidarity between oppressed peoples. Robeson’s father had been a slave and after being freed as a slave he became a preacher and he often used Hebrew text and Hebrew language in his preaching. And so he had been raised to see the commonalities between the victims of oppression and prejudice.   |
| Sally | Ātaahua, beautiful.  |
| Giacomo | Ngā mihi.  |
|  | **MUSIC BY PAUL ROBESON – ZOG NIT KEYN MOL** |
| Sally  | You’re with Speak Up – Kōrerotia and today we’re talking about Holocaust awareness with Kris Clancy and Giacomo Lichtner. I’d like to think about now Holocaust awareness in New Zealand. There was a survey that was conducted in 2019 asking New Zealanders, randomly selected, about their knowledge of the Holocaust, and some of the findings are quite worrying. It would be great if you could talk us through the results and then we will have a discussion about what they might mean.  |
| Kris | I can only speak from an American standpoint, I was not in New Zealand at the time when it was done and Giacomo can correct me if I’m wrong. The New Zealand survey was done after a CNN survey showed that in America Holocaust education at that time and still is, very varied state to state because we don’t have a national curriculum. An amongst children between the ages, I think it was 11 and 18, upwards of 30% to 35% don’t know about the Holocaust. Coming from America and knowing those numbers and being a teacher in America when I was living there, it’s terrifying. It’s absolutely terrifying. As a Jew that lived in the south of the United States, which if your listeners know anything about the south you know any kind of non-white Anglo Saxton protestant is generally not going to be the ones that are accepted into society. And knowing that a third of my students hadn’t heard of this horrible time in history, regardless of any religious belief, it means that it can happen again and that it only takes one or two generations before we start forgetting and that leads to a repetition of history which we never want to see.  |
| Giacomo | That’s absolutely right. In terms of context there was surveys not just in the US but also in Austria, in France and the European Union has been surveying not so much Holocaust awareness but certainly anti-Semitism recently because people are reacting to what they see on the ground which is a rise in certainly in anti-Semitism and a rise in Holocaust denial through the internet and social media. As far as I’m aware it was the first such awareness in New Zealand and so it is a little hard to find any kind of trend but I think it’s concerning enough to suggest that - I think the results say 28% were unsure about how much they knew and 27% only knew a little - that’s concerning enough to carry on polling Holocaust awareness so that we can discover trends, really. I think that would be the main takeaway. The thing that struck me of those results was around the question of whether the Holocaust is a myth. It was a very direct question and so it’s hard to argue that there was ambiguity or confusion. 4% answered yes that the Holocaust was a myth and that’s concerning but to be honest 4% these days probably represents accurately a kind of fringe. It’s a very concerning fringe, it’s a large fringe, but it’s a fringe. But what scared me more was the 30% who answered they were unsure and I think our efforts would be well directed to that 30%. There’s a minority, a small minority of people who are anti-Semitic and have prejudice and have disbelief of the Holocaust in spite of overwhelming historical evidence is part of that prejudice and we may not be able to convince them. But we should be able to educate the 30%.  |
| Sally | Also some of the results from that, there was a lack of awareness around the numbers. I also found interesting looking at it, the correlations. So for example there was a really strong correlation between age and awareness, there was a really strong correlation between where people are living particularly their deciles they’re in and awareness. And I think it would be great to hear from you guys, what are your views on these sorts of correlations that we’re seeing. I know it’s a relatively small sample number, only 1,000 people, but still I guess it’s enough to kind of get a sense.  |
| Kris | I guess I would start with always saying what I would tell - because I taught psychology at the same time - correlation does not necessarily equal causation. We do know that - and again coming from America - you guys call them decile, we call that low socio-economic, you do see a strong correlation of understanding of the prejudice that happened during that timeframe amongst those students, that they get what happened and they understand it on a much better level than someone from stereotypically be a higher socio-economic class. Because they’ve gone through those struggles. What struck me the most about it all is that it highlights the need of a cohesive educational component in the New Zealand curriculum about teaching racism, discrimination, Holocaust education and how that fits into the New Zealand story. So often when I go to a school or I’m talking to people and I say I’m the Education Director of the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand, I get the you’re the what…where? We have one of those? I’m like yes, it’s been there since 2012 and before that there was a research centre since the 1980s and people are going I didn’t even know. New Zealand is part of that story for good and for bad, how New Zealand reacted at the time and what it’s done since then. And the only way we can reach the 30% that were unsure - and I would even say the 4% that are in that fringe - is through education and getting that story and the history out there.  |
| Giacomo | Tautoko. What Kris said was about socio-economic correlations and about the need for education, good on you Kris. On the decile, Sally, I’m not sure…I know that Curia who produced the poll suggested that as a correlation. I’m not quite sure the results show that because if you look into the results proper, it says decile 1-3, so in theory the more affluent parts of society, had 48% who did even know a reasonable amount or a lot and decile 4-7 had 39% and that’s where Curia found a correlation. But if you go further down into the deciles, the deciles 8-10 returned a 46%. So I don’t think that really shows anything. What the survey does show, I think, more convincingly is a marked difference between older and younger New Zealanders. 57% of I think over 60s and only 18% of the younger age group. I can’t remember exactly what the age group was and that really shows what Kris is saying. That the education system is not getting to children.  |
| Sally | So I think we’ll talk about education as we move forward. I’d be interested to hear from you, particularly you, Giacomo, who have been teaching in New Zealand for several years now: although we may not have polls that can tell us whether awareness is declining or increasing, have you noticed anecdotally, amongst your student cohort for example, if there’s been a rise or a decline in knowledge and awareness of the Holocaust?  |
| Giacomo | I’m a little reluctant to… it’s so anecdotal. My evidence from the classroom is not representative. Also because I teach people who have already decided to go into tertiary education and to study history so you know, they probably are not a representative sample of society. But one thing I have noticed, though, is that I think the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand’s strategy in offering professional development to New Zealand teachers by helping them get to Yad Vashem, to probably the world’s foremost centre for education in the Holocaust which is in Jerusalem, is really paying off. I keep coming across university students who remember being taught case studies around Holocaust education either in English, English literature or film and media studies or in history or in social studies because their teacher had been exposed to this programme. I think that’s making a real difference. More generally I cannot say but what I think there is no doubt about is that there is an increase in anti-Semitic incidents in New Zealand which mirrors the increase elsewhere. In some countries that increase is incredibly marked, in the UK for example and in France. But also in the US, I think, there was an 18% increase from 2018 to 2019, there are statistics available for this. And I don’t think New Zealand is immune to that and the rise in anti-Semitism almost certainly comes together with the rise in either Holocaust denial or just general ignorance of the Holocaust.  |
| Sally | Do we have any idea why we’re seeing these trends?  |
| Kris | I can speak from what I know historically. You see anti-Semitism as like a… it goes in waves and it’s circular. As economics go up, we tend to see anti-Semitism go down and as economics go down, we tend to see a rise in anti-Semitism. We see also if there’s a marked shift in societal views on minorities in general, a rise in anti-Semitism happens because usually in Europe and in America, Jews have always been at the forefront of those marked societal shifts. Whether it’s the right for women to vote, civil rights for minorities, labour movements, things like that and commonly that’s also association with economics and so normally that’s when we see that rise and fall is depending on what’s going on in the society at the time. But I think it would be disingenuous to think that that’s the only time we see it. Social media especially has completely changed the name of the game. You can go online at any given time and read a post about something that you would think is innocuous and if it mentions even oh you know, George Soros who is so often quoted about having involvement in everything, that’s a veiled anti-Semitic attack because they’re quoting somebody who is a very rich billionaire who is very philanthropic. What they’re really using is an anti-Semitic trope about the government control and media control and you know, Jews having their hands in everything and that I think is where we are not losing the battle, but where we are finding we have to start shifting our focus is to that online component.   |
| Giacomo | And those tropes that Kris is talking about are incredibly resilient. I mean they, in some form or another, survive time, right? In some cases, you can trace them back all the way to the Middle Ages and you see them all the way through, evolve and change and then come back. My hunch is that we have seen a rise in the last few years because anti-Semitism has made a leap from what used to be a quite circumscribed right-wing area and has become a little bit more mainstream and has found synergies in particular with anti-Zionism which is not just amongst the right but in amongst radical left, for example, and while you know, criticism is obviously completely legitimate, there are a couple of ways in which that often seems to me to allow anti-Semitism and anti-Semitic tropes back into the discourse. One is that there is a very distinct inability to distinguish between government and people, that doesn’t appear consistently in political discussion about most countries. And the second is the assumption that is legitimate to hold Jewish communities in the diaspora outside of Israel responsible for Israeli policy. I think that’s where the anti-Semitic incidents are coming from and I suspect if you want into the data a little bit more you would see a direct correlation with the situation in the Middle East.  |
| Sally | Fascinating stuff, isn’t it.  |
| Kris | It’s scary stuff.  |
| Giacomo | Yeah.  |
| Sally | We might have our second song which is ‘Never Again: A Song to Remember the Holocaust’ and then we’ll come back and think more about this question why. Why is it important that we actually remember it? |
|  | **MUSIC BY STEPHEN MELZACK – NEVER AGAIN: A SONG TO REMEMBER THE HOLOCAUST** |
| Sally  | Tēnā, Speak Up – Kōrerotia with Sally Carlton, Kris Clancy and Giacomo Lichtner today talking about Holocaust awareness. Now the really big question: Why. Why is it important that we have an awareness of the Holocaust? Why is it important that we do not forget?  |
| Giacomo | So I think there are three reasons and the first is the Holocaust in its own historical significance. So as an historical event, even without thinking about relevance into the future, it is a historical event that is a landmark in all sorts of ways. And I’ll just pick out one and that is the invention of the Final Solution. So the Nazis don’t invent much through much of their rise and the rise of anti-Semitism in the first legislation against Jews. They’re not inventing that much; they’re using tropes that are already there. They are evolving them but they are using pre-existing measures. The ghettos are not an invention of the Nazis, they go all the way back to Venice in the Middle Ages and then across Europe. And certainly economical, cultural prejudice and persecution are not a Nazi invention. Indeed, European countries were implementing anti-Semitic measures in the 1920s before Hitler came to power. Hungary is an example, my own Grandfather had to leave Hungary in order to study at university, he had to go to Italy because only some Jews were allowed at university in Hungary. This was before Nazism. But where they move onto something completely unprecedented, which is probably the reason why we now continue to think about the Holocaust as particularly important, is The Final Solution and Raul Hilbergdescribes the order the Heydrich receives from Himmler in the summer of 1941 as a licence to invent. We need to get rid of the Jews, you decide, you do what is necessary. And so the setting of power and machinery of the nation state towards the destruction of people is really unprecedented and obviously the use of gas to doing it. That is one reason. The other is the nexus with history both before and after the Second World War. The relationship that the Holocaust intrinsically has with Nationalism, with European Imperialism, Colonialism. The lessons that the European countries learn from the 19th century appear in the Holocaust and the Holocaust reveals them. And then finally contemporary relevance, which we can talk about more later.  |
| Sally | I think I’d like to just pick up on your second point there around the before and the after. This is a human rights show, the United Nations were birthed as a direct result of the Holocaust so that would be one of the really, really massive reasons why we need to think about it because the foundation of our human rights practices and policies today stem from that period in time.  |
| Giacomo | Ka pai.  |
| Kris | I always tell people, especially when I’m talking to students, there is really no such thing as history because, again, if we’re saying it is an event that is done, it’s over, it’s not affecting us. That’s history. When I taught in the States, as Giacomo talked about, 19th century nationalism, I used to tell my students I can make a direct correlation and lead you from Napoleon to the death chamber in 1945. And kids would always go that’s just not possible and so I would draw them through that timeline and they’d be like, how did we not learn from that? How did we not figure this out? Too often when we go about our daily lives we miss that bigger picture and remembrance and having some sort of educational component or a memorial, it helps us bring us back to that idea of we’re only a tiny little part of this picture and of this story. There’s so much more going on and even that one small event can have an effect later down the road and we have to remember how that’s going to affect longer and longer. Especially as we get into things like this, where we have recordings now. You know, Hitler’s speeches, they’re always going to be there. We might not want to hear them, we might not want them to get out there, but they’re always going to be there and the only way that we can make sure that they’re used in the correct fashion is in an educational setting where people are learning about everything he is saying and what it led to. Otherwise if they’re just hearing it, they’re going to attach that importance of again of oh well he’s got some good ideas and we don’t want that.  |
| Sally | Kris you touched on it before, this idea of people saying oh New Zealand has a Holocaust Centre, why? And I think one thing that would be great to talk about is why is it relevant to New Zealand? Why does the Holocaust have relevance in a New Zealand context?  |
| Kris | That’s a great question. People always are surprised at that, we have a Holocaust Centre, thinking New Zealand is not involved. But in reality, New Zealand, just like most western democracies, was involved from the beginning in actually allowing the Holocaust to happen. The Jews were given basically an ultimatum by Hitler in Germany and Austria and said you got to go, you can’t stay here. And there was a convention held in Evian, France, to bring together all the world’s powers and say OK, how many are you going to take, who is going to take them? And while sympathy was expressed from the New Zealand government, they took zero. The same as America and Canada and the UK; this is not a unique issue to New Zealand. I always talk about the Dominican Republic as an example of a really good upstander because they are one of the poorest countries in the western hemisphere and they agreed to take 10,000 and they are a fraction of the size of New Zealand with way less resources.So that’s one of the reasons how it relates to New Zealand. New Zealand was involved in the beginning. New Zealand passed laws, immigration laws limiting how many people could move here. Some of these people came here as refugees and the cost of them getting to New Zealand wasn’t just a monetary cost, it oftentimes came at a very physical and a very personal cost because they were leaving behind everything that they knew, coming here with nothing. And then oftentimes it came down to Walter Nash, who was the customs minister at the time, basically saying yes or no. It was his decision to let people in or not based off the immigration law that had been passed in the 1930s.The Christchurch Refugees Emergency Committee received 150 applications, roughly around 250 people, give or take. 30 of them were approved by Walter Nash and the rest of them were not. We have one that was approved that made it, we think, we hope, to London, but the applicant and his mother-in-law were both ill, they disappeared, and when we looked on Yad Vashem’s database of victims, they’re listed as victims having been killed. Which means that even then people who got out sometimes were not allowed to stay, they were forced to go back knowing that they were going back to their death. On the flipside, New Zealand in the good part of that history because New Zealand is one of six countries that liberated camps and they’re part of the Hall of Honour in the United States Holocaust Museum Memorial and I think that’s also something New Zealand needs to be very proud of. Is that they were a part of those… that liberated camps and helped to stop the genocide and that makes it very personal. A lot of Kiwis have grandparents or great-grandparents that went to Europe to fight the Nazis and it’s something they should look at with pride.  |
| Giacomo | New Zealand fought against the Nazis and is part of the story but also in spite of its immigration policy, it did take in refugees eventually especially after the war. You know, some people made it here and they became really integral parts of New Zealand’s community and they helped this country after the war. Amongst them are the people who founded the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand - twelve or so former refugees or survivors of the Holocaust. And so it is part of the New Zealand’s history. Beyond that I would say, going back to the importance of the event as a whole, its philosophical and historical relevance is so importance that it has universal ramifications including New Zealand and I wrote in the past about how in the history of the Holocaust you can hear both echoes and harbingers of dawn raids for example. So in a country that has an intrinsic interest in the history of racism and the history of discrimination, you know, you can’t just pretend that the Holocaust isn’t part of that history.  |
| Sally | Yes, very well said. We might have our final song now which was your choice, Kris. The New Ground, ‘Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears’. If you could maybe just talk us through why you chose that.  |
| Kris | When you talk about refugees, oftentimes it’s a story of just utter devastation and sadness - but coming to New Zealand, or in this case the song is about going to America - you know, there’s a duality there, you do have that hope, you are leaving… you are going to a place that is going to be a better life for you and so the refugees that did make it to New Zealand, both before and then after the war, they came here with that hope that they were going to be able to restart their lives. But you also have that sadness of knowing that once you have left, the odds of going back are almost nil. And even today with the refugees that we see around the world, if they leave, they’re leaving understanding that the odds of going back are just not going to happen because they’re fleeing war, persecution, ethnic or religious tensions. And to me, it speaks to, as Giacomo said, the universal message of the Holocaust  |
|  | **MUSIC – CELTIC WOMAN – THE NEW GROUND – ISLE OF HOPE, ISLE OF TEARS** |
| Sally  | That was ‘Isle of Hope, Isle of Tears’ by Celtic Woman. Now just to finish off we’re going to be thinking about, looking forward, how do we ensure that people regain or retain an awareness of the Holocaust. I did note just this week actually, so in the past few days, Facebook has come out and declared they’re going to ban Holocaust denial content.  |
| Kris | [laugh] |
| Sally | Kris is having a bit of a giggle over here, which I thought might be a good conversation starter.  |
| Kris | I was giggling because I think Giacomo and I both have a very similar opinion based off the look he had on his face. I mean yeah they’ve done it which is good but why has it taken this long. Mark Zuckerberg himself is Jewish, had family in the Holocaust. So the idea of while we won’t want to limit free speech - I don’t prescribe to that idea. I am very much of the idea of Karl Popper, who was a philosopher who actually was a refugee to New Zealand. |
| Sally  | In Christchurch.  |
| Kris | In Christchurch. He was a professor at Canterbury University until after the war when he would move back to UK and then he’d move to Austria. He had this idea of you have to be intolerant of intolerance because the only way to guard a democracy is to not allow intolerant views that demean or depolarise or dehumanise a sect of your society because once you do that, you allow the rise of fascism, you allow the rise of hate and of extremism. And so in my personal view, it’s a good thing they did it, it should never have taken them this long and the excuse of free speech I think it’s just that, it’s an excuse. Holocaust denial isn’t just an idea, it revictimizes everyone that was killed and that is something that we should never have allowed.  |
| Giacomo | I agree with what Kris said and also with his scepticism. The reason I was giggling is you suggested it as I was thinking, for how long? How long will it take until it gets in through a backdoor or something. But let’s not be cynical. I’d like to think - and you guys are broadcasting from Christchurch - I’d like to think that this is perhaps a direct result of the Christchurch Call and an increased awareness in which this country is at the forefront of the real harm, the way that digital hate can become physical hate and have real consequences in the community regardless of which community. And I think it will be really interesting to see if and how the incoming government follows up on work that has been done on possibly hate speech legislation. On the idea of free speech, I agree with Kris. And what frustrates me is that these kind of purist arguments around pure and unfettered freedom of speech ignore, either wilfully or otherwise, that freedom of speech is never pure because access to the means of communication and access to the platforms through which we make our speech heard is not even, is not equal. Until we reach a utopian dream in which there is perfect equality of access, I don’t think you can argue that there is perfect freedom of speech. We have to put measures in place to curb our freedoms as we do with any other number of freedoms to protect the minorities and to protect the more vulnerable.  |
| Karl | It’s also something that I think a lot of people don’t quite understand when we say you have the freedom of speech or the freedom of movement or the freedom of religion and things like that. It doesn’t mean you negate your responsibility and it also doesn’t mean you are free from the consequences of whatever action that leads to. Too often people to try to hide behind the, ‘Well I have the freedom’. OK fine, sure if you want to have that idea, great, but here’s the consequence. And when the consequence doesn’t match up to the level of freedom, I think that’s where we need to have the… you know, not just Zuckerberg doing what he did but all social media platforms should be doing this. Snapchat, you know, teenagers are all over Snapchat. Just recently they had this thing on Snapchat where teens were… I don’t know if it was a filter or if it was makeup or if it was both, they put on this filter to make them look like they were dead and they were ghosts and then they would make a soliloquy about how they had been killed in the Holocaust. Whether it was to honour or not, it was in incredibly poor taste and that’s an example of free speech gone too far because that’s something you are taking the experience of somebody that is not you and you don’t understand and you are cheapening it.  |
| Giacomo | Just to jump in for a second and say that I think experimenting with different forms of expression is OK - I don’t want to be Chief Censor, alright, I don’t want to be you can say this or you can’t say that - but there’s a difference between looking for different ways of reaching different audiences and we’ve just been talking about how important it is to reach different audiences and you know, Kris mentioned Tik TokAnd the other example is VR. There was quite a lot of discussion about the Auschwitz experience in virtual reality and there are plans in the Ukraine of constructing a kind of immersive experience of Babi Yar, the site of the massacre of Kiev’s Jews. I want to leave open the door for experimentation - I think it is important - but you draw the line at the expression of hate, that’s not about good taste, it’s kind of a violent attack.  |
| Sally | I think this probably gets back to what we’ve been saying right from the beginning around the importance of education and if people are aware of what actually happened, they’re probably less likely to go down that sort of path. We’ve talked about how important it is to teach people about the Holocaust and that would be in schools, primarily, as a starting place and what’s going to be happening as New Zealand history becomes a compulsory part of the curriculum moving forward and just balancing the international with the local. It certainly can be done, there’s no question around that, but just any comments you’ve got.  |
| Kris | We just launched this year an initiative called Just One Week and Just One Week offers teachers, I guess you can call it a package. It comes with lessons and videos and activities, teacher resources on teaching the Holocaust from that local perspective and bringing in the events of what happened in Europe to why it affected New Zealand through the survivors that we have that came to New Zealand. Because I think that when you start talking about, especially those survivors that came here, that automatically makes it local because those survivors bring with them those experiences and they bring with them everything that they went through and that influences how they would then go about the rest of their lives. A good example would be Clare Winter, she was from Hungary and among other camps survived Auschwitz. Clare’s lasting legacy besides the Holocaust Centre and all of the work that she did, is she gifted her violins to the School of Music at Te Kōkī at Victoria University of Wellington. That’s a very local history, that will continue for time immemorial as long as those violins are played and to me, that’s how you do it.  |
| Giacomo | I like that and to pick up your point, Sally, on the balance between local and international/global. I quite like the idea that UNESCO put out actually three years ago and I think maybe New Zealand should have taken notice, that you could use Holocaust history within a broader global citizenship education. I think New Zealanders are global citizens traditionally, they go on their OE and all that, and we have a nation of immigrants and emigrants. So I think it would be interesting to think about teaching Holocaust history within that broader global citizen education context. At the same time, I am incredibly upset and concerned by what seems to me an inexplicable provincial turn by the National Library in getting rid of hundreds of thousands of books from their collection simply on the basis that they were published outside of New Zealand. I think 90,000 of those are Holocaust related. But this goes beyond Holocaust education, it’s just insane to get rid of those books. The Holocaust books are being saved by the Holocaust Centre in Wellington, I’m not sure where we are going to put them but they are certainly not going to be pulped which is what would have happened probably otherwise. And I think that is incredibly short-sighted.  |
| Sally | Any final thoughts as we conclude our kōrero today?  |
| Kris | A final thought would just be that to understand the camps were the end, the camps were not the beginning, the camps were not the middle part, the camps were the end. It began with small things. Prejudice is the thought and discrimination is the act and we have to remember that prejudice, if it’s not corrected, leads to discrimination and then that leads eventually to massive attacks on communities, whether it’s the Jewish community, the Muslim community or other minorities. That we can’t allow those steps to happen again. Being an upstander doesn’t mean always being that person who is getting involved right in the front, it’s that person who is also going to events and learning more about things they don’t understand and then discussing it with their friends. Dissemination of information that way is so much more powerful than when you have somebody who is standing in front of you telling you you’re wrong. I always tell kids that’s how you do it. You always have to be that person who is just willing to listen and act as a group. You know, there were millions of Germans that were not Nazis, there were so many more that were not than there were, and had they used that power, who knows? I can’t say it wouldn’t have happened but maybe it wouldn’t have happened as large as it did.  |
| Giacomo | Kia ora Kris. My final thought is that memory is not enough. I am a little concerned that globally in Holocaust education we could settle for the United Nations passing legislation that made the 27th January an International Day of Holocaust Remembrance, that’s not enough to convey the significance of the Holocaust and there’s a danger that memory can be hollow and shallow. I would like to concentrate on the expression ‘Never again’ and the way that it is often used really out of context and with nothing concrete. ‘Never again’ when we say it needs to be an expectation, it needs to be a commitment to preventing the sorts of small steps, the building blocks of discrimination and hatred that Kris was talking about. When it’s not like that, when it’s just used as a rhetoric figure, then it’s not an expectation or even an aspiration but as Peter Novak wrote now 20 years ago, just a ritualised reminder of expectations and aspirations that are now passively abandoned. And the fact that while committing ourselves as humanity to the remembrance of the Holocaust, states could stand back and watch Rwanda and Bosnia, Kosovo and South Sudan or Darfur reminds us that remembrance is not enough, we’ve got to have action.  |
| Sally | Great place to finish off, Giacomo, thank you very much. Tēnā korua, thank you so much for this really robust discussion and I really hope that this encourages people to get a bit more engaged with what we’ve been talking about.  |
| Giacomo | Ngā mihi Sally, kia ora Kris.  |
| Kris | Thank you.  |