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SOUTH AFRICANS COMMEMORATING IN POLAND: MAKING MEANING THROUGH PARTICIPATION

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A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

Johannesburg, 2006.

ABSTRACT

This research report focuses on the issues for participation in public memory projects, in the light of counter-monument critiques of audiences being 'rendered passive'. Interviews with people who went on the 2005 *March of the Living* tour to Holocaust sites in Poland and then to Israel have been analysed in terms of themes and processes of meaning-making. The written text of some of the material provided to them is also analysed.

Meanings in the interviews notably occupied two discursive spaces that seem at odds with each other. The first was the discourse around what is a good way to memorialise – particularly when the memory is one of such enormity as the Holocaust. The second is the discourse around tolerance education – how do we 'learn lessons' from the Holocaust?

The issues for heritage interpretation and tolerance education are explored.

Key words
Holocaust memory
Public memory and participation
March of the Living
Tolerance education
Heritage interpretation
Memory and meaning making
South African Jews
Memorialisation
Jewish identity
Human rights education

DECLARATION

I declare that this research report is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.

Carol Low

(Name of candidate)

_Carol Low_____

(Signed)

_____4th_____day of **___July_____**, 2006.

PREFACE

The Holocaust is central in Western consciousness as the very darkest of times when state-sanctioned acts of unimaginable cruelty were perpetrated on people. Just writing about the Holocaust raises enormous anxiety and uncertainty. Our concerns persist that we human beings need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust. Our other refrain is that we must never forget. How we may learn the lessons and how we best remember is the focus of my research.

The whole subject rightly denies us easy answers or even easy routes to understanding. The path that I have taken is to engage in a dialogue with people who went on a Holocaust memorialisation tour. The dialogue took place before they went and upon their return. And for me the dialogue continued as I listened and re-listened to their recorded interviews and grappled with writing an account of what I heard.

I have shaped my accounts in this report with my knowledge of public memory discourse and my awareness of social justice. I have also steered away from anything that could seem like a facile critique in the face of such immense human suffering and grieving, and people's need to remember. Rather, I have aimed for deep listening to the ways in which people try to deal with these matters, and make their meanings.

The dialogue continues – in the sense that this report will be read by others including some of the participants themselves. My hope is that the story does not end, but that the learning and the remembering continue to provoke questions that elude closure.

Carol Low
January 2006

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CONTENTS **Page**

1	Introduction	1
2	Concepts and issues for the research	9
3	Analysis of written texts	21
4	Interviews with the participants before they went	29
5	Themes and issues from the interviews after the participants returned	44
6	Interviews with tour commentators	71
7	A good way to memorialise or a lesson in tolerance?	81
8	References	91

Appendices

1. Statement of commitment to ethical research practice 97
2. Information sheet 99
3. Participants' consent agreement form 101
4. Focus questions: 'before' interviews 102
5. Focus questions: 'after' interviews 103
6. Schedule of memorialisation processes 104
7. Training programme of participants 109
8. The pledge of the *March of the Living* 112
9. The South African pledge of the *March of the Living*. 113

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 *The March of the Living* – history, description and significance

1.1.1 Preamble

Sites of atrocity, tragedy and loss have become heritage destinations for many people. For Jews in particular, visits to the sites of the Holocaust have become almost "obligatory".[1] One such organised tour is the *March of the Living*, an annual twelve-day tour of Poland and Israel. The central focus of the tour is the march from Auschwitz to Birkeneau, which follows in the footsteps of Holocaust victims. More than twenty-thousand people marched this year. This research report will explore the issues for meaning-making by participants on tours of such sensitive sites.

The questions of what meanings people make, the processes of meaning-making and the apparent human needs being met will be addressed. The primary focus is on the ways we remember, and how we learn lessons of tolerance from the Holocaust. The representations of the participants and the organisers, and in some of the written texts used to promote and prepare people are analysed and located in their cultural and political contexts.

1.1.2 *The March of the Living*

The *March of the Living* is an organised twelve-day tour of Poland and Israel to visit a number of sites significant to Holocaust memory. These include five of the death camps, cemeteries, synagogues, memorials such as to the Warsaw ghetto, Schindler's factory, and museums such as *Yad Vashem* in Israel. The participants take part in services, ceremonies, discussion groups and marches. The *March of the Living* itself takes place each year on the fifth of May, *Yom Ha'Shoah*, an international day commemorating the Holocaust. Participants walk the same path and in the same formation as did those Holocaust victims who were forcibly

[1] Jack Kugelmass (1996:201) makes this claim in respect of North American Jews.

marched by the Nazis from Auschwitz to Birkeneau on the so-called Death March. This tour had additional significance for participants in the year 2005 as it marked the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps, and the end of Nazi rule. It is estimated that close to twenty-one thousand people from around the world took part in the march. This particular tour then went on to Israel in time to take part in two significant days in the Israeli calendar – one mourning and commemorating those who have fallen in the struggle for Israel, *Yom Hazikaron*, and one to celebrate Israel's independence, *Yom Ha'atzmaut*.

The *March of the Living* was initiated in North America in the 1980's for young people (Kugelmass 1992:408 and 1996:204). It is only one of many such "pilgrimages" to Poland and Israel organised by Jewish organisations or synagogues, with most of them originating in the United States and Israel. [2]

The South African group this year included older people as well as young – nearly two-hundred and fifty people in all. Three of the participants were survivors of the death camps. An experienced tolerance educator and tour guide led the tour. The tour was logistically organised by a young Jewish woman, the tour coordinator, and managed by the South African Jewish Board of Deputies (SAJBD). The SAJBD is the "central representative institution of the [Jewish] community" in South Africa, with advocacy and service roles. Its mission is to "work for the betterment of human relations between Jews and all other peoples of South Africa" (South African Jewish Board of Deputies 2005). There were seven preliminary training sessions (see Appendix 7) to prepare the Johannesburg participants, and de-briefing sessions after the tour. Although de-briefing was also promised for every evening during the tour, this did not occur except once, and then informally between participants. The schedule was intense with multiple activities on each day – often

[2] Kugelmass (1996:204) adds that these largely originated from Israel in the 1960's for high school students.

from dawn till well into the night (see schedule in Appendix 6.) Considerable distances were covered by aeroplane between countries and then in buses travelling across Poland and Israel.

The promotional flyer promised participants the opportunity of transformation – "an experience that will forever change how they look at their lives." The journey is described as taking participants "from the richness and anguish of the past" to the "hope of the future". The slogan is:

Embrace the Past – Grasp the Future.[3]

1.2 Aim, rationale and methodology of research

1.2.1 Aim

This research focuses on the oral representations a particular group of people made of the meanings for them of personal experiences of Holocaust memory sites and processes. These representations are juxtaposed against some of the written texts preparing them for their tour, and representations by some commentators on the tour. The primary analysis concentrates on the documented voices of fourteen South Africans visiting Poland and Israel on an institutionally organised tour of Holocaust commemoration during May 2005.

Through this case study, themes of meaning and processes of meaning-making are identified, against some apparent human needs to visit memory sites and participate in commemorations. The broad goal of the research is to gain a better understanding of meaning-making and participation in public projects of memorialisation of atrocity, collective suffering, trauma and loss. The prime concern is to locate the nexus between how people remember and how they may learn the lessons of the Holocaust.

[3] All quotes from the *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).

1.2.2 Rationale

There is an apparent human imperative to memorialise, with monuments to the First and Second World Wars being particularly commonplace in the West. Specifically, the growth in numbers of Holocaust memorials, commemoration sites and museums in the last few decades has been notable.[4] This research explores aspects of people's representations of one such phenomenon – the *March of the Living.*

In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) expressly recommended memorialisation as symbolic reparation (Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1998)[5]. Approaches like these have been deliberately adopted with an agenda for memorials and commemoration sites to heal and reconcile. This seems to be an unexamined proposal – in the South African context at least. Analyses of many South African post-TRC memorial projects have mainly dealt with issues of control over the production of memory, and outcomes for people and communities, frequently of fractured projects and processes.[6]

The counter-monument movement in Europe brings a vigorous critique to memorials and memorialisation. Its proponents observe that monuments and memorials are "inherently fascist" in nature, rendering the audience passive[7] (Young 1992:267), freezing memory and "robbing the community of their interior memory work" (1994:20).

Ironically, the direct voices of people remain largely silent in these discourses.[8] This lack in the research on collective memory is noted by Kansteiner (2002:179). He observes "most studies on memory focus on the representation of specific events… without reflecting on the

[4] See Totten in Davies (2000:98).
[5] Volume 5 of the Final Report deals with this.
[6] See the work of Ereshnee Naidu (2003 and 2004) and Lazarus Kgalema (1999) in particular.
[7] Young is quoting counter-monument designers Jochen and Esther Gerz (1992:267).
[8] In South Africa, the work emanating from the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation has, however, demonstrated a commitment to community-based and participant-focused approaches to memorialisation (see Naidu 2003, 2004 and Kgalema 1999).

audiences of the representations in question". He calls for a focus on what he terms "memory users" (2002:180). Lennon and Foley conclude that visitor motivation in what they have termed 'dark tourism' needs further research (2000:169). This research therefore addresses a neglected area of study – the representations and motivations of individuals participating in commemoration processes, and the reported efficacy of these processes.

Related and very pertinent to this study is the work of Jack Kugelmass, who draws from written and oral accounts of the experiences of North American Jews visiting Poland and Israel (1992, 1994, 1995, 1996).

His research examines the multiple ways in which people use memorials to construct meaning within a context of visiting sites of atrocity on an organised tour. These include meanings around tolerance, identity, nationalism, mourning, redemption and reconnection. Both the individual and collective dimensions of this meaning-making will be explored. The processes of pilgrimage, of public and private ritual, of dealing with pain and 'keeping memory alive' are identified. The significance of place and authenticity as relevant to the participants is described.

The participants' representations of their motivations, expectations and experience are given a Jewish and a South African context, with particular reference to the questions of suffering, struggle, healing and reconciliation, remembering and memorialisation, and especially tolerance.

1.2.3 Methodology

The **research approach** is an eclectic one, based on qualitative methodologies employed in the social sciences, and drawing on the researcher's wide experience in community consultation processes.

The **research focus** is on three sets of texts:

1) A selection of the written material given to the participants who went on the tour.
2) Interviews with fourteen South Africans who visited Poland and Israel as part of the *March of the Living* commemoration process, before they went and upon their return.
3) Interviews with five commentators to the process (the two tour leaders and the rabbi who went on the tour, a human rights educator who also went on the tour, and a researcher in memorialisation.)[9]

Analysis of the texts identifies broad themes relevant to discourses on Holocaust memory, museum studies and heritage interpretation. This analysis draws from the insights of discourse analysis as applied in the social sciences.[10] What Margaret Wetherell (2001:382) calls a "fine-grained" conversation analysis will be beyond the scope of this research report. Rather there will be attention paid to questions of dominant and counter voices. Contestations about representation will be identified where they occur, as well as the construction of identity and meta-narrative.

Similarities and differences between the broad themes represented in the different texts are identified. Some commentary on differences between the interviews before and after the participants went on the tour are also subject to analysis. A further layer of analysis deals with the emerging issues for heritage interpretation and tolerance education.

The **research process** was conducted with fourteen South Africans who visited Poland and Israel as part of the *March of the Living* memorialisation process, as well as with five commentators on the tour

[9] Insights on the layers of voices in meaning-making and identifying the 'authoritative' or dominant voices and counter-voices were pertinent here. See, for example, James Wertsch on Bakhtin in his chapter 'The multivoicedness of meaning' in Wetherell et al (2001) *Discourse Theory and Practice: a Reader*.

[10] For example, in the work of Wetherell et al (2001).

(as mentioned above.) Permission was given by the leader of the group and by a representative of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, which managed the tour. The methodology consisted of face-to-face interviews, and a subsequent thematic analysis of these recorded interviews.

Initially participants were given information about the research, the hoped-for outcomes, and assurances of confidentiality and a report-back. They were invited to participate voluntarily. Once they were able to ask any questions they had of the researcher, their consent was gained in writing. Permission to digitally record the interviews was sought. (See Appendix 1: Statement of commitment to ethical research practice.)

The participants were interviewed before and after their memorialisation experiences. The interviews took the form of semi-structured conversations, using open-ended questions. The first round of interviews was based on six focus areas (see Appendix 4). This covered the participants' motivations, expectations and demographic data.

The follow-up interviews were based on eight focus areas (see Appendix 5.) This covered participants' most significant experiences, disappointments and reactions, and how they aimed to carry forward their memories.

Subsequently, three particular commentators – the two tour organisers and accompanying rabbi – were invited to comment in interviews after the tour. They were selected particularly to provide contextual information in three areas:

1. How the tour had been organised, promoted and represented.
2. Comprehensive information on the memorialisation process itself.

3. South African Jewish world-views on the Holocaust and Holocaust memory, suffering and identity, and locating their experiences in the South African historical, cultural and political climate.

Their interviews were recorded and analysed for themes and issues.

In addition, a further interview was conducted with a human rights educator who went on the tour, and a researcher who has looked at South African and Jewish memorialisation. They were selected to possibly represent divergent voices from the main group of interviewees. These interviews aimed to explore issues around Holocaust memorialisation and human rights or tolerance education, plus South African Jewish world-views on the Holocaust and Holocaust memory, suffering and identity. Their interviews were recorded and analysed for themes and issues.

Finally, three selected written texts supplied to the participants in preparation for their tour were analysed in terms of the discursive framing of the tour for participants (Wetherell et al 2001:24). The tone, register and use of language and image were the main focus. Broad themes were identified especially in terms of issues concerning tolerance education and heritage interpretation.

The whole research report is informed by contemporary issues in the literature around Holocaust memory and participation in Holocaust memory tours – such as 'learning the lessons', tolerance education, healing, identity formation and experiential needs, as well as contextualising such experiences in South Africa. The next chapter identifies and discusses these issues.

2 CONCEPTS AND ISSUES FOR THE RESEARCH

2.1 Holocaust memorialisation

James E. Young, that prolific commentator on Holocaust memorialisation, (1992, 1994 and 1998) observes that there is something of a "Holocaust memory boom" (1994:19). While he regrets the "displacement in memory of one thousand years of European Jewish civilisation with twelve catastrophic years", he affirms that we need to analyse "its place in contemporary Jewish life, examine it… and understand its consequences" (1994:19).

The contemporary boom in Holocaust memory is contrasted with its absence in the period immediately after World War II. Gregory (2000:44) noted in relation to survivors' written testimonies that "in the immediate aftermath of the war almost nothing was written… as if stunned by the recognition of the violence done to the canons of civilised behaviour, no-one dared talk of what happened". This "Public Secret" as Linenthal (1995:3) coined it, was broken piece by piece by survivor (and liberator) testimony, then actively collected and held in substantial collections at *Yad Vashem* in Israel, Yale University in the United States, and in many Holocaust memorial centres around the world (Totten 2000:98). Books, films and television documentaries have been produced in abundance since and continue to be. For survivors themselves, such as Primo Levi and Charlotte Delbo, the telling of the stories is both "exorcism: to turn memories into meaning" and "moral witness" to educate so that we learn from history (Glendinnen 1999:51).

In the face of the absences of graves[11] for most of the six million Jewish Holocaust victims, and no surviving family to remember them, museums and memorials have been established in increasing numbers. In the United States alone by September 1998 there were approximately fifty

[11] Young (1994) in reference to this brings attention to the 'missing gravestone syndrome'.

Holocaust resource centres, twelve memorials and nineteen Holocaust museums (Totten in Davies 2000:98). Holocaust tourism is another part of this "boom" to keep memory alive. (Young 1994:19).

2.2 Keeping memory alive or burying it?

Young (1994) reminds us that it is fundamentally through words and actions that we keep memory alive. These words and actions are not enacted in a political and cultural vacuum.

Creators of Holocaust memorials, particularly in Germany, have grappled with this, addressing the issues of national interest and the resultant myth-making around memorialisation processes. Broszat writes: "[monuments to the Nazi era] may not recall events so much as bury them beneath layers of national myths and explanations" (quoted by Young 1994:20). There is a capacity of memorials paradoxically to cover up the very past which they aim to keep alive. In Andreas Huyssen's words, "[monuments are] the burying of memory and an ossifying of the past" (1994:15). Young (1994:20) points us to Pierre Nora's warning about memorials "not [concentrating] memory so much as displacing it altogether, relieving a community of it own interior memory work".

Young in particular has documented a range of examples of "counter monuments" which have emerged as a result of these discourses.[12] Counter monument creators such as Jochen and Esther Gerz have aimed to avoid the "didactic logic of monuments [and] their demagogical rigidity", seeing fascism itself in the usual modes of monument (Young 1992). The Gerzs' aim is "not to console but to provoke" – demanding ongoing interrogation of the past in the present. They are clearly suggesting here what the 'words and actions' of memorial visitors may need to be to prevent the interring of the past – interactions around interrogation. Their emphasis on the engagement of audience pointedly

[12] See the examples in James Young's 'The Counter Monument' in *Critical Inquiry* 18: Winter 1992.

raises questions about Young's "fundamentally dialogical, interactive nature" which he insists exists in any memorial (Young 1994:21).

The work of Thelen and Rosenzweig, *The Presence of the Past* (2001), based on the study of 1,500 people's responses on questions of how they use history is relevant here. They report that people "believed that in order to use the past in their everyday lives, they should create or recreate open-endedness in their experiences."[13]

2.3 Learning the lessons of the past

The very *raison d'etre* of Holocaust memorials, is that we will never forget – so that these atrocities happen 'Never Again'. The ongoing question is: How do we learn these lessons? Peter Novick in his critique of Holocaust memory, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory* (2001) firmly suggests that if we are to move on from the past, learning its lessons, we need to "[confront the past] in all its complexity and contradictions… in all its messiness". The challenge by the counter-monument advocates, by writers on the Holocaust like Novick, and historians like Thelen and Rosenzweig is: how do people become actively engaged in dialogue around these pasts?

Analysis of the words and actions of groups participating in Holocaust memory tours could further illuminate the issues raised by these theorists – this time from the consumer or participants' point of view. However, as Kansteiner points out (2002), this is little represented in the literature. A pertinent exception is the research project by Jack Kugelmass on North American Jewish tourism to Poland and Israel. He reports on the collected writings of and interviews with participants in his chapters "The rites of the tribe: American Jewish tourism in Poland" (1992);[14] and "Why

[13] See also David Thelen's article contextualising their thesis in South Africa: 'How the Truth and Reconciliation Commission challenges the ways we use history' in *South African Historical Journal,* vol. 47 (2002).
[14] In Karp et al (1992) *Museums and communities: the politics of public culture.*

we go to Poland: Holocaust tourism as secular ritual" (1994);[15] "Missions to the past: Poland in contemporary Jewish thought and deed" (1996);[16] and his article, "Bloody memories: encountering the past in contemporary Poland" (1995).[17]

From the words of the participants, Kugelmass unthreads some of the themes around their actions. Some of these are building identity through "bearing witness" and "performance". He suggests that what he calls these "secular rituals" offer North American Jews the "healing of ruptures in the cultural system of knowing and through it, the promotion of group continuity" (1996:211). If these visits to Poland are indeed missions of healing, how is this healing constituted? What does it mean particularly for those who visit Holocaust memory sites and who are not direct survivors or even descendants of survivors?

2.4 Social healing

Much has been written about individual healing from trauma through memory work, or from loss through grieving. Core texts on these topics are Judith Herman's *Trauma and recovery: from domestic abuse to political* terror (1992), and Elizabeth Kubler-Ross's *On Death and* Dying (1969).[18] Yet, very little has been documented and analysed about social healing, or about social or community healing across cultures.[19] However, ritual processes, either traditional or improvised, certainly seem to be a key part of social or community healing.

In South Africa, with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the memorialisation projects that have came out of it, new ways of social or public healing have, in a sense, been trialled. As Bozzoli (1998)

[15] In Young's *The Art of Memory* (1994).
[16] In Antze and Lambek (1996) *Tense Past: cultural essays in trauma and memory*.
[17] In *Cultural Anthropology,* vol.10 (3), 1995.
[18] Emerging texts now challenge Western assumptions about these painful states of distress, and the paths to healing from them. See Patrick Bracken's chapter in *Rethinking the Trauma of War* (1998).
[19] A rare insight into group and community healing ritual processes is given by Aleinda Honwana in her 1999 article, 'The collective body: challenging Western concepts of trauma and healing'.

pointed out, the TRC hearings "used the method of ritual, rather than that of law". As well as 'reconciliation', the rhetoric of 'healing' and 'closure' was commonly used at the time of the TRC and its *sequelae*.[20] The very notion of 'closure' is an assumption about an outcome of healing. Closure would also seem to be in contradiction to the "open-endedness", "messiness" or "provocation" that critics of memorial and history projects advocate.

The processes of secular ritual are used in Holocaust memory projects. As Kugelmass (1994,1996) comments, Holocaust tourism such as the focus of this research, *The March of the Living,* enables participants to re-inhabit the past via activities of ritual. He claims these organised tours have elements of pilgrimage, which seemingly have some motivation around redemption. He says: "[these] tours are structured around the themes of destruction and redemption, with almost all groups concluding their travel with a longer tour of Israel". The actions of mourning, solidarity and then celebration around survival of the Jews (when the tours characteristically culminate in Israel), have a narrative shape of healing and resolution, if not closure.

Writers like Kugelmass (1992, 1994, 1995, 1996) and Novick (2000, 2001) have paid attention to the particular relevance of Holocaust memory and memorialisation to North American Jews. There has been no similar documentation contextualising South African experience of Holocaust memory and Holocaust pilgrimage. Similarly, there is no literature on how South African participants use these experiences of occupying the physical and emotional spaces of the Holocaust past. Are they experiences of healing or closure? Are participants consoled, reconciled or provoked? Has living through the TRC provided a context which links healing with memory?

[20] See, for example, Hamber and Wilson (1999), also the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Final Report (1998).

2.5 Holocaust memory in the South African context

The Final Report of the TRC (1998) reiterates the way the process was framed as one of healing. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, former head of the TRC, in his opening address to the TRC said, "We are… part of a process of the healing of our nation". The multiple atrocities that were perpetrated by the apartheid regime and its precursors were made accessible to the people of South Africa during the TRC and subsequent processes of revision of history, museums and memorials.[21]

There is no apparent record or analysis of how South African participants of Holocaust pilgrimages, such as the *March of the Living,* represent any significance of their coming from a nation which has recently emerged out of a period of racially based state-sanctioned terror, and where there have been very public processes of reconciliation and healing, and the fostering of a human rights culture. The small but significant number of Jewish people who were active in the struggle for human rights in South Africa is part of this context.

Perhaps a pointer to interrogating these contextual aspects is given by Archbishop Desmond Tutu writing of his visit to Israel. He describes how emerging from *Yad Vashem*, the Holocaust museum in Jerusalem, he told the inquiring media that he found it a shattering experience. He says that he added, "the Lord whom I served, who was himself a Jew, would have asked 'But what about forgiveness?'" (Tutu 1999:215). Clearly for Tutu this, the epitome of memorials to the six million Jews who died at the hands of the Nazis, lacked one crucial ingredient: forgiveness.

This emphasis on healing and forgiveness may belong more to a Christian worldview. Representations that South African Jews may construct about their experiences in Poland and Israel could well be more about mourning, building identity, bearing witness and celebration of

[21] See inter alia Nuttall and Coetzee (1998) and Coombes (2004) for comprehensive analyses of this revision.

survival, as Kugelmass reports for their North American counterparts. As Kugelmass (1992), Novick (2000, 2001) and Finkelstein (2000) point out, this survival is especially symbolised in the creation and continued existence of the Israeli nation-state.

This meaning-making around anguish, loss and survival needs to be seen in the broader Judaic context, too. Rabbinical teachers such as Ezriel Tauber, (1992) who was himself a Holocaust survivor, present specific Judaic perspectives on the Holocaust and suffering. He writes: "No one people or nation has a comparable history of suffering. Yet, their suffering is directly connected to their promises of greatness" (1992:45). Tauber explains, "The Holocaust, like the entire history of Jewish suffering (and like every private experience of suffering), has to be viewed through the lens of *Torah*. That, in and of itself is the beginning of the redemptive process" (1992:123). Others also bring traditional insights to the acts of bearing witness, ritual and pilgrimage, and the role of these in Jewish identity-formation.

2.6 Identity, meaning-making and Holocaust memory

Holocaust pilgrimages are seen in Kugelmass's words as "obligatory" for North American Jews (1996:201). It is as if these visits to the past are needed to build contemporary Jewish identity. Kugelmass observes that public memory sites such as memorials and museums offer us a signal stage for such processes of identity formation and affirmation. Kugelmass (1996:210) writes, "Poland… is filled with ready-made props". He draws our attention to Connerton's[22] "persuasive argument for the performative nature of social memory" (1996:210). Secular rituals such as Holocaust tourism offer participants the experience of such enactments.

The motivation for these enactments around identity is fuelled, it is suggested by Kugelmass and others such as Peter Novick, by fears

[22] He is referring to Connerton's *How Societies Remember* (1989).

amongst North American Jews of the perceived loss of Jewish identity through assimilation and intermarriage. Novick suggests that, in the face of this loss of 'Jewishness' and the sense that anti-Semitism is on the rise in parts of the world,[23] there is an increasing commitment to build solidarity as Jews (2000:170–203).

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So, Holocaust memory is presented as pivotal to Jewish identity. In *The Holocaust in American Life* (2000), Novick critiques the emphasis among contemporary North American Jews on the Holocaust as defining their identity. He posits an earlier Jewish identity in North America which was more aligned with a progressive, liberal world view, and less with separating themselves off from the rest of North American society and identity. He further depicts this as Jews "defining themselves by their history of victimisation" (2000:171). Linked to this is the fact that Holocaust tourism, at least from North America, is on the increase.[24] There is in tandem continuing interest and commitment to Israel as part of Jewish identity. The visits to Holocaust memory sites characteristically conclude in Israel, enacting a narrative of despair to hope, from near-annihilation to survival.[25]

As Kugelmass observes, the importance of such tours may well have "[grown] in proportion to the ambiguousness of the Arab-Israeli conflict" (1996:205). Furthermore, Israel for Jewish people can be seen both as religious prophecy and as political struggle. Holocaust memory, then, can tend to be constructed as inextricably tied to both Jewish identity and the cause of Israel. This is inherent in the way the *March of the Living* and other tours are constructed (Novick 2000, 2001 and Finkelstein 2000).

[23] See Novick's documentation of expressions of growing concern regarding these perceived threats in *The Holocaust in American Life* especially chapter 9 'Would they hide my children?' (2000:170-203).
[24] As already noted, Kugelmass declares it is "obligatory" for North American Jews to visit the sites of Holocaust memory (1996:201).
[25] See for example, the promotional flyer for the 2005 *March of the Living* tour (ca. 2005).

It remains to be explored if there are similar themes around identity formation, or whether regional differences have resulted in other representations or nuances of representation for the South African experience.

These issues of how Holocaust memory is constructed or produced all suggest constraints on how participants may actually engage (through their words and actions) in dialogue and debate as part of making meanings of their memorialisation experience. In addition, when the story is one of such enormity of atrocity and human suffering as the Holocaust, the narrative can assume qualities of myth and the sacred. Here any contestation, or even representation of multiple voices, may seem at least disloyal if not sacrilegious.

2.7 Meaning-making via public memory projects

Learning in museums is increasingly seen as a product of debate and dialogue. Writing on museum environments, Tony Bennett[26] "describes this shift from [the] 'monologic' museum of modernity to the 'dialogic' museum of post-modernity". Hein, who focuses on learning in museums, invites us to question whether debate is encouraged or discouraged (1996:33). For Lisa C. Roberts (1997) this learning process of knowledge construction and meaning-making is essentially a dialogue between the narratives presented by the museum curators and the visitors' narratives.

This museum literature gives us some indications of how processes of meaning-making may occur through other memory projects, such as heritage sites. We therefore get glimpses of how we may 'learn the lessons'. The processes appear to be around personal motivations and needs for extraordinary experiences in these settings. These are even further linked to the wish for personal change. Looking at museums

[26] Quoted by Mason (2005:202) in his article 'Museums, galleries and heritage sites: sites of meaning-making and communication' in Corsane's (2005) *Heritage, Museums and Galleries: an introductory reader.*

again, we see that writers such as Silverman (1995) and Mason (2005) have examined the "paradigm shift" that has occurred from traditional learning theory to communication theory and meaning-making.[27] The results of museum studies in the past often gave demographic pictures of visitors, their leisure patterns and their evaluations of the museum exhibits. But this was not generally linked to the more personal ways in which people make meaning for themselves from a museum experience, or even feel some healing or other personal transformation in the process.

These issues have particular pertinence to museums or heritage sites dealing with human suffering. The literature has started to respond to these concerns. For example, in 1994 the *Museums Journal* featured case studies of museums tackling difficult subjects of war, sex, AIDS, and death. (Davies 1994). Terence Duffy (2004) listed museums of 'Human Suffering' that were linked with the struggle for human rights. Here in South Africa there are examples of memorial-museums, such as those for the apartheid era and the struggle against it, as well as for the Holocaust – the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg and the Cape Town Holocaust Centre. The missions of these South African museums are to offer the visitor nothing less than "a journey to understanding and freedom and equality" (Apartheid Museum, no date) and "[to] become sensitive and responsible to the issues and consequences of prejudice, intolerance and indifference" (Pimstone et al 1999).

Memorials and memorial tours such as the *March of the Living* potentially offer their visitors the same opportunities for deepening knowledge, for dialogue and personal shifts that may be transformative (*March of the Living* promotional flyer ca. 2005). The hopes for change through profound experiences that motivate people to visit these sites of suffering

[27] Lois Silverman (1995) gives us a helpful introduction to these possibilities framed in terms of human needs in her article 'Visitor meaning-making in museums for a new age' in *Curator*, vol. 38 (3).

appear to reflect deep human needs. These are infrequently acknowledged in museum or heritage literature.

2.8 Sites of atrocity – why do we visit?

Writers such as Lennon and Foley (2000) report on the increasing trend of tourism to sites of recent death, catastrophes and massacres.[28]
An ordinary tourist would generally be searching out the most pleasurable holiday destinations, with occasional trips to historic sites. However, with 'dark tourism'[29] – notably visits to Holocaust sites – participants are choosing to occupy the physical places where huge suffering was inflicted on people by other people. They are paying for the opportunity to enter the imagined emotional spaces themselves.

Sheldon Annis[30] identified three experiential needs relevant to museums that are arguably equally relevant to heritage sites. They are the reverential, associational and educational. This perspective has been promoted through the work of Graburn, the three needs becoming a feature of the American Association of Museums' 1984 *Museums for a New Century* document.[31] Tours to Holocaust sites clearly offer participants experiences of reverence in the face of reminders of colossal inhumanity and loss. This may be through public acts of commemoration, and through grieving – Kugelmass's "secular rituals" (1992). Associational needs could be met through experiencing solidarity with others, sharing through discussions and de-briefing. The tour guides, written materials, talks by experts including survivors, and the seven preparatory lectures address educational needs at least on one level.

Annie Coombes (2004:88) defines "reflection and intimacy as the touchstones of the more successful museums or sites that deal in…

[28] They go further by saying that "horror and death have become established commodities" (2000:58).
[29] Lennon and Foley's term and title of their book (2000).
[30] Silverman acknowledges Annis's definition of these experiential needs (1995:163).
[31] Quoted in Silverman (1995:163).

gruesome tragedy [such as the Holocaust]". While she appears to be writing about site design, she is in a sense predicting reflection and intimacy as visitors' experiences, and suggesting also that they are experiential needs.

Heritage sites have long aimed to meet the human need for experiences that in the words of Freeman Tilden (1977:8), the pioneer in heritage interpretation, "enrich the mind and spirit". When these heritage sites memorialise terrible atrocity, tragedy and huge human suffering, how the narratives are constructed, the questions framed and the atmosphere created are crucial. Will they engage participants at the level of their deep needs? Will they respect the dead and the sensibilities of the living whilst still taking the risks Tilden (1977:32–39) proposes to "provoke as well as instruct" us? And will they even extend to the Gerzs' echoing challenge to "provoke rather than console"?[32]

This research report takes up these issues in the following chapters by analysing the written texts given to participants who went on the 2005 *March of the Living* tour, and the recorded interviews with fourteen participants and five tour commentators.

[32] Quoted by Young (1992).

3 ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN TEXTS

The package of written information for the participants of the *March of the Living* tour provided them with a variety of types of information – dates and places of certain events in Jewish history especially in Poland, narratives, and instructions. There was a preliminary promotional flyer, a programme, and later a handbook given to them in Poland, which included a pledge, the protocol for the *March* itself, survivors' testimonies and poetry. This chapter selectively analyses this package of written texts in terms of how they framed the tour for participants. I pay attention to the use of narrative, tone, register and choice of words and images used. Then I draw out some of the issues for heritage interpretation and tolerance education.

3.1 Orientation to the tour

In many senses – "psychological, pedagogical and environmental"[33] – the programme provided the participants with an orientation to the heritage tour upon which they were about to embark.

This orientation was literal in terms of detailed itineraries with maps of Poland and Israel. The programme also gave lists of what to pack, what to read, and thirty instructions on behaviour.[34] These instructions signalled to participants that they would be out of their everyday roles, and importantly, 'representatives'.[35] Eleven of the thirty instructions related to security, indicating the dangers of such tours in a world climate of so-called 'terror attacks' and, pertinently for this group, of Arab-Israeli conflict. These instructions in themselves implied the *gravitas* of the journey they were taking. The instructions presumably were also aimed at

[33] In writing of museum and heritage sites, Wolf (1992) conceptualises orientation broadly, encompassing all three aspects.
[34] In the first three pages of the *March of the Living Programme Guide South Africa 2-13 May 2005* (ca. 2005).
[35] The *Programme Guide* on the second page point 1 says "Remember that you represent not only yourself, but also South Africa". Implicit perhaps is that they are also representing South African Jewry.

giving confidence, so that people knew the schedule, the behaviour expected and how safety risks would be tackled. These are key messages, addressing some initial fears so that people could start to engage as participants. As Wolf (1992) points out, this preparation is psychological as well.

3.2 Style of language

The significance of this tour is primarily defined by the evocative style of language used in the written texts. The promotional flyer is headed:

> *Embrace the Past – Grasp the Future.*

So, the connections between past and future are assumed, and the emotional tone indicates what attitude is encouraged. Coxall (1996:206) cautions against the use of "evaluative" language such as this.[36]

Participants are promised "twelve days of unforgettable experience" which will "forever change how they look at their lives". The import of it being the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps and from Nazi rule, and the words "you will experience history where it was made," marching "shoulder-to-shoulder" with eighteen-thousand other people,[37] signify that this is an extraordinary tour offering experiences that touch some deep human needs.

3.3 Human needs and Holocaust tourism

The human needs that draw people to be "enriched"[38] by a tour such as this are profound and diverse. As Jack Kugelmass[39] puts it, the people are:

> *Visiting less as tourists than as pilgrims… to see the past, to pay homage to ancestors and to heal what they have increasingly*

[36] Coxall is writing about museum settings here; however, this could be equally applicable to heritage settings.
[37] All quotes from the *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).
[38] Tilden (1977:8).
[39] See Kugelmass's work drawing from the writings of and interviews with 'Holocaust tourists' from North America (1992, 1994, 1995 and 1996).

*come to realise is a radical rupture in the memory fabric of their culture (*Kugelmass 1996: 200).

As mentioned in chapter two, needs that have been identified as having relevance for museum practice (Silverman 1995:163) include the reverential, associational and educational.[40] It could be argued that these are equally relevant to heritage and memorial sites. The *March of the Living* handbook interprets as reverential the re-enactment of the death march, in words like "commemoration","silent tribute", and "mourning".[41] It also interprets the associational aspects for participants in terms of solidarity, "marching hand-in-hand," as a connecting "bridge" between the Holocaust survivors and the next generation, and as identifying with Jewish memory and aspirations. The text examined assumes in this and other ways a Jewish readership and focus.

Overall, the *March of the Living* is described as an "International Education Programme."[42] Reflecting this, much of the package of material contains historic information and facts, reading lists, research topics and websites. There are details of the series of seven training sessions for participants before they leave on the tour (Appendix 7.) Beyond this more conventional approach to education, the package also presents personal testimonies of survivors and the poems of a victim of the Holocaust.

3.4 Identifying

Personal testimonies, it has been observed, are effective in conveying the 'lessons' of the Holocaust. Both Holocaust education and Holocaust museum literature describe this affecting use of "personalised and

[40] These three needs are applied by Silverman (1995:163).
[41] *Handbook for the March of the Living on Yom Hashoah May 5, 2005, Nisan 26, 5765*, (ca. 2005:1-3).
[42] *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).

dramatised history" (Schwarz 1999:33).[43] This offers what Young (1994:19) calls "vicarious memory" to participants on such tours. As a process, the audience places itself in relationship to the story and the teller, reads into the words, and responds. Participants identify with the teller and the narrative.

Another way of identifying is to share a sense of mission or purpose. The text in the written package offers a sense of mission to those who march to be part of "the strongest protest… against Holocaust denial".[44] The handbook contains a seven-point pledge that includes:

> *[Keeping] alive and [honouring] the legacy of the multitudes of our people who perished in the Holocaust, …[fighting] anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism … and every form of discrimination against any religion, nationality or ethnic group.*

(See Appendix 7 for the full text of the Pledge.)

The process of identifying by definition creates boundaries. The texts examined appear directed towards a Jewish readership, assuming a shared knowledge and significance of Jewish calendrical rituals and sites, plus a focus on Jewish history in Poland, and on Israel. The word "our" in the quote above is interesting in relation to this issue. Who is included in this "our"?

By contrast, throughout the texts examined, there is the repeated inclusive use of the personal pronoun "you".[45] This has the effect of very directly inviting the reader in to identify as a participant.

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[43] See also Haydn (2000:141) in Davies book *Teaching the Holocaust: dimensions, principles and practice.*

[44] Frontispiece of *Handbook for the March of the Living on Yom Hashoah May 5, 2005, Nisan 26, 5765,* (ca. 2005).

[45] Coxall (2000:56) points out the inclusive effect of such language.

3.5 The role of participation

People's participation on such tours as the *March of the Living,* is in a sense that of pilgrimage. Kugelmass frequently uses the term 'pilgrimage' (1995:281, 1996:200).[46] The narrative shape of the tour "from the anguish of the past to the hope of the future"[47] – from Poland to Israel – is that of the pilgrim's difficult physical journey in quest of redemption. Within this overall pilgrimage, there are specific rituals or enactments. These are spelled out in the package given to the participants.

Apart from the march itself on the fifth of May, a number of ceremonies were scheduled at other death camps and sites significant to Holocaust memory and to Polish Jewry. A leaflet asked the participants to write half a page related to one of these sites, particularly if they had family connections there. Poems or other pieces were also welcomed to be "included in the programme on the day". The writer ended by urging readers:

> *These ceremonies form an integral part of our experience in Poland. It is important that your voices are heard.*

Participation by contributing to secular rituals such as giving readings, singing and placing wooden plaques is foreshadowed in the programme and the handbook. The re-enactment of the march, bearing witness to the suffering by occupying the physical and emotional spaces of the gas chambers and crematoria of Birkenau,[48] and the planned sharing in de-briefings, meant that the people on the tour were offered the opportunity to be not passive recipients but active agents[49] in interpreting the significances for themselves – making meanings. The promise is that

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[46] He does, however, also differentiate between traditional religious pilgrimages and what he terms "secular ritual".

[47] *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).

[48] Again relevant here is Connerton's insistence on performance as intrinsic for social memory, which Kugelmass identifies as "bodily practices… [which] maintain tribal memory" (Kugelmass 1996:210).

[49] See Mason on the passive/active audience paradigm for museums, galleries and heritage (2005 especially page 201) and Hein on constructivist learning in museum settings (1996 and 1998).

they can become aptly in Tilden's words "companions on the march" (1977:31). But then – are they? Is their interpretation not constrained in certain ways?

3.6 Whose story?

To put it another way, "at some certain point, [potentially] it becomes [the participants'] story as much as [the interpreter's]" (Tilden (1977:31). Yet, the boundaries and shape of the teller's (or interpreter's) story, the exclusions and inclusions, its mythical propensities borne of many re-tellings, are all constructions.[50] Coxall (1996:204), writing of museum practices, remarks "a writer's choice of language, and the issues that he or she chooses not to address in the final text, transmit both the official policy of a museum and the personal 'world view' of the writer". The story is also constructed in and by broader religious, social and political contexts.

Given that tours like the *March of the Living* end in Israel, the themes of survival of the Jews and nation-building are given significance. The promotional leaflet says: "In Israel you will encounter a country that is striving valiantly to keep the age-old flame of Jewish nationhood alive".[51]

Summing up the twelve-day tour, the promotional flyer continues: "Poland and Israel: one the richness and anguish of the past; the other, the hope of the future". This is interpretation in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict, and broader debates around Israel's responses in this conflict.[52] Any such issues of potential contestation are not referred to in the written texts surveyed.

[50] See Mason on constructivism and semiotics (2005:202-203).
[51] *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).
[52] As mentioned above, Kugelmass (1996:205) writes: "One cannot help but think that the increasing popularity of such events as the *March of the Living* is growing in direct proportion to the ambiguousness of the Middle East situation".

3.7 Broadening the story

This particular tour was also framed for participants in terms of education for tolerance. This is reflected in the *March of the Living* Pledge[53] (Appendix 8):

> *To fight every form of discrimination manifested against any religion, nationality or ethnic group.*

A specific South African version of the pledge (Appendix 9) adds:

> *As a South African, I pledge to fight against genocide, mass murder and torture in my continent.*

The need for understanding in present-day Polish-Jewish relations is highlighted in several articles supplied to the participants. Indeed, the tour leader (who is a tolerance educator), in her personal letter to participants, reminds them that the main lesson from the Holocaust is 'Never Again!' She writes:

> *I hope that all of us will come back from this journey strengthened in our conviction that each one of us has the power and will to make this world a place where hate and discrimination has no place.*[54]

3.8 Issues for heritage interpretation and tolerance education

There is a particular tension represented in these interpretations in the written text for the *March of the Living* participants between the agenda of deepening tolerance awareness and the agenda of 'Jewish nationhood'. Buoying up the whole ethos of the tour is a reverence around commemoration, Jewish history and the hope for future Jewish survival. This reverence needs to find a 'fit' with the tolerance education agenda that, by contrast, may require vigorous debate and contestation – a

[53] This is the third item on the seven-point Pledge (Appendix 8).
[54] Letter by Tali Nates given to *March of the Living* participants, Johannesburg 2005 (personal communication with the author).

dialogic rather than a monologic process, which unpacks rather than solidifies meanings.[55]

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4 INTERVIEWS WITH THE PARTICIPANTS BEFORE THEY WENT

This chapter describes the themes emerging from the interviews with fourteen of the participants from the Gauteng group before they went on the *March of the Living* tour in May 2005. They volunteered to be interviewed following my presentation to the whole group. The interviews followed a semi-structured conversational format (Appendix 4) and were digitally recorded.

I have shaped my analysis of the recorded oral texts via the themes and issues identified in chapter two, and emerging from people's motivations for and anticipations of the experience. These themes are reflected in the literature on Holocaust memory and museum studies in particular. Attention is paid to how people have made meanings through public remembering, and how these raise issues for heritage interpretation and tolerance education. I identified patterns of commonality and of contrast with the literature and amongst the interviewees. Their words have been quoted where it seemed appropriate to illustrate the themes and the tone of their responses.

4.1 Overview and profile of interviewees

The fourteen participants interviewed for this research project comprised six women and eight men, all South African-born. Eleven of them are from Jewish backgrounds,with three of these describing themselves as non-observant Jews. Of the three non-Jews, two (a married couple) are very committed Christians and of Afrikaans background; and the third not of any particular faith.

All of the participants,except the last person mentioned, have very strong connections to Israel – with family living there, business connections, having lived there themselves and/or visited frequently. Only one had never visited Israel. Overall, the group of fourteen come from a

predominantly tertiary educated background. Six are single people, the rest married with children. In age they range from early twenties to early sixties, five of them being under thirty-two. Three had direct family members affected by the Holocaust in Poland. Others were mainly from a Lithuanian background, their forebears having arrived in South Africa at the turn of the twentieth century or in the early decades thereafter.

During the interviews it became evident that at least nine of the participants are active in community affairs. Seven of these are involved with Jewish, Israeli or Christian affairs or activities, and two of these seven were particularly involved in activities concerning Holocaust memory.

All of the participants had first heard about the *March of the Living* through being part of Jewish networks. This tour is particularly well known through Jewish schools, where in other years it has always been promoted amongst young people.[56]

4.2 Tourism choices

Choosing to go on a tour like the *March of the Living* sets one apart. One person said:

> *People think I am crazy – that if I am going to spend a fortune on a holiday [I would like] lots of sun and sand … Instead it is like going to a museum for a week … people don't understand.*

Another said:

> *It sounds crazy – inflicting pain on myself … but I need to identify [through the suffering].*

In different senses, participants wanted to enter the suffering of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. Those who had family members

[56] This time the tour was extended to adults as well because of the extra significance of it being the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps.

directly affected by the Holocaust had particular motivations around this suffering.

4.3 Motivation and family connections

Three of the participants had direct family affected by the Holocaust in Poland. A fourth had only just discovered he had Jewish forebears and that there were probable family losses in Poland – but this was not the original motivation for going.

For one whose grandmother and great-aunt were Auschwitz survivors, there was a personal awareness of the intergenerational impact of this massive trauma. He remembers his grandmother, who had lived with them, having nightmares all her life. This influenced family life. For him, the journey to Poland had a strong motivation to "identify, and understand what they went through, because they were so strong and courageous". A "sense of duty" was how he describes it, with a personal journey of dealing with feelings of guilt. He expressed one of his aims as to look at his life and to learn not to take things for granted.

4.4 Personal transformation

This urge for a change in perspective on life was expressed by at least six participants – "to find out what's important". An expectation of personal change was strong, most participants expressing it in terms of returning with a sense of mission (see 4.7 'Mission' below), or changing through the experience itself.

Some represented a yearning to enter particular emotional spaces of empathy: "[As Jews] to feel that anguish and sorrow for each other", said one, and "to try and feel what they must have felt", said another.

Many said they had learnt so much about the Holocaust – at Jewish day school, or as part of the large number of television shows, books and

films now widely available – but with this tour they wanted to "get behind" or "beneath" or "cut through" the story. One expressed it as wanting

> *to make intellectual things palpable, real, to become part of me – to know.*[57]

4.5 Place and object

For some this 'knowing' was anticipated from occupying the physical places where the Holocaust took place. One said:

> *It is as close as you can get to stamping it inside you in a vivid way.*

Another said:

> *[On a small scale] it's like when someone has died and you go to their house and go into their bedroom – it makes it a lot more real*.

Place was also seen as important to try and comprehend the incomprehensibly huge numbers who died overall – day by day in the gas chambers, and whose bodies were burnt in the crematoria, and whose ashes are still visibly stored to this day.

Some acknowledged that they were aware that the sites of the death camps had changed, and further that they may not experience the familiar stark black-and-white images of film and television – that there may even be green grass and flowers. A couple had on a previous tour visited Therezenstadt in spring and had had this disquieting experience of natural beauty masking the horror. This was not what they had come for. So some were preparing themselves for this possible disappointment.[58]

The places that were most often specifically mentioned in this context were the death camps rather than the other sites they were to visit (see

[57] As the narrator in Schlink's *The Reader* says on his motivation to go immediately to the Struthof concentration camp: "I wanted reality to drive out the cliches". (1997:148).
[58] There had in fact been particular mention made of this in the preparatory lectures they attended.

Appendix 6 for a schedule of the sites). This was, in one participant's words, "where the suffering took place", and was more significant to her than the *March of the Living* itself.

4.6 Ceremonies

In contrast some participants thought for them the focus would be on "the ceremonies [which] will be more moving than the actual physical place". The person who said this, saw as significant:

> *the emotions [that will be] contagious with thousands of people there.*

The pivotal ceremony of the tour is the eponymous *March of the Living* that occurs annually on the Jewish day of Holocaust remembrance, *Yom Ha'Shoah*. The year 2005 marked the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the death camps and the end of Nazi rule, and the anticipated eighteen thousand from around the world was an extra incentive for several interviewees to actually go this time. A key factor was that this time it was extended to adults and not only young people.

Linked with this was people's sentiment that this was a "March of Defiance":

> *It makes a statement to the world – especially in the face of Holocaust denial – it is saying 'We are Here!'*

For another the *March* would be saying:

> *We are getting stronger.*

This was one aspect of a mission, of a broader-than-personal purpose, which most participants ascribed to their tour.

4.7 Mission

Other than the march itself as a declaration, forms of mission varied for participants. For two of the non-Jews going it was an answer to their

prayers that they should go – particularly to be in solidarity with Jews and to march with them. Their main mission was to show remorse and ask forgiveness for what Christians have done to Jews – a calling quite distinct from the other participants'.

All of the participants saw that they would be returning from the tour with a mission. As one said:

> *You become a bit of an ambassador when you go on a tour like this.*

For most people this may mean coming back and giving talks at their synagogue or community group – or particularly to tell their families:

> *I will tell my children, entrenching it deeply in them – after all, my children <u>are</u> my heritage.*

One envisaged coming back and being active on a broader stage against genocide, while another expected at least to:

> *"[be prepared] to say to others – if this looks like happening again – stand up and say 'Never Again'.*

These two people had a very strong emphasis that this tour was for them about intolerance in the world and their sense of commitment to do something about extreme forms of intolerance such as genocide.

4.8 Tolerance and plurality

"A lesson in tolerance" characterised the tour for one young participant. She linked this with the ongoing racism in South Africa against black people. Another person linked the tour with the need for deepening tolerance awareness – "an ethic for this multicultural society of South Africa". Eight of the fourteen participants mentioned genocide or ethnic cleansing or "Hitler-like" leaders in other parts of Africa, the former Yugoslavia or Afghanistan. They related these instances to the Holocaust and the need for tolerance in the world. Notably, only one of the fourteen interviewed mentioned the Arab-Israeli conflict in this context.

For five interviewees, this concern for tolerance focused on the anti-Semitism they saw in the world. Special concerns by three people were expressed about anticipated anti-Semitism in Poland – with another not wanting to blanket all Poles as anti-Semitic and wanting something positive to come out of this aspect for herself. Indeed, two participants wanted to know more about Polish life in general – one hoped that on the tour he would be able to slip away from the group and "have a few drinks with some Poles"; another recognised that Poland "had its own very interesting history".

Two people acknowledged that Poles were also murdered in the Holocaust.[59] One of these two named gypsies and homosexuals as amongst those who were persecuted and killed. Another, who identified as a homosexual, predicted being very aware whilst on the tour of the persecution and killing of homosexuals by the Nazis, but planned personally to remain 'in the closet' while on the tour.

Another person specifically acknowledged that people other than Jews had died in the Holocaust, and also linked the de-humanising strategies of the Nazis to the way in which, in South Africa, it is too easy not to see the humanity of the so-called "maid" or the beggar on the street. Yet she claimed the focus for her on this tour was explicitly and centrally on Jews and Jewish identity.

4.9 South Africans and remembering the Holocaust

Continuing this theme of a pluralistic worldview and the need for deepening tolerance for others as a result of our knowledge of the Holocaust, four interviewees saw strong parallels between Nazi systems and their associated atrocities and the apartheid regime. Two mentioned

[59] Gregory (2000:41) writes: "We know with a fair degree of accuracy that about 3.5 million Soviet prisoners of war were killed by Germans either in the death camp of Auschwitz or in other ways gunned down. Poland's losses were of the order of 6-7 million, about 22% of the pre-war population. Of those Poles killed, about 3 million were Jews".

the 'We never knew what was going on' syndrome as an example. Another mentioned that with one of the concentration camps right beside a village, "[people] must have seen what was going on – but did not say anything". This person did not, however, relate this 'syndrome' to the South African experience.

Similarly, three people specifically in talking about the absolute horror for Jews in Europe under Nazi rule, mentioned 'the knock on the door' and the forcible removals. This was not linked with South African experiences under the repressive influx control and detention laws and forced removals of the apartheid government. The "Boer War" (the South African War), however, was linked with Holocaust experience by way of an offered example of "the lots of suffering [we have had here] in South Africa". For another, the "Boer War" and processes of memory and redemption around the sites of huge Boer losses was recalled during the interview. This was in answer to prompting about memorialisation generally, but was not directly linked to the Holocaust. (This also reflected the interviewee's Afrikaner family history and heritage.)

4.10 Solidarity with the living, solidarity with the dead[60]

Concerns about the survival of Jewish identity were raised in varying ways. Some noted that this was in the face of "assimilation" of Jews (one commented that as many Jews have been lost to assimilation as to the Holocaust), of Holocaust denial and of anti-Semitism being on the rise again. Five people observed that the young people were in many ways leading an identity and/or religious revival in this regard.

One said the tour was:

> *An opportunity to identify even more strongly with my Jewish roots or persona – to know where we belong, as part of the Jewish nation, not just this little world in South Africa.*

[60] Jack Kugelmass (1996:201) uses the phrase "solidarity between the living and the dead" to denote the healing of discontinuity in contemporary Jewish Holocaust history.

This same person, when being asked about any family connection with the Holocaust in Poland, said:

My family is the three million Jews [who were killed in Poland].

Identifying with the dead was a strong aspiration for the tour experience for many. This was often the case whether they had lost family members or not.[61] The march itself is framed as following in the footsteps of, and in the same formation as, those who were marched from Auschwitz to be murdered in the gas chambers at Birkeneau. This gave an opportunity for one person to identify particularly with the children who died:

I need to suffer, to see what they went through.

Her intention was most particularly to mourn the one million children – "Somebody has to remember", she said.

This need to remember the dead was further expressed as "honouring", "paying tribute", "keeping their memory alive", or "elevating their souls".

4.11 Not healing but connecting

When prompted, only four of the interviewees agreed that they saw the tour as a healing journey. Three of these were non-Jews and the fourth came from a family of Auschwitz survivors.

Others mostly saw healing as maybe being for survivors visiting the sites, or for survivors' children. They did not see a "wound" or "sickness" that needed making whole. One person said:

It is not to make it better; it is to learn the lesson.

The tour was further variously described in response to this question as affirming that "We are still Here", a "lesson in tolerance", a commemoration process, or a significant journey with as-yet hidden personal consequences.

[61] As mentioned, three of those interviewed had direct family members affected by the Holocaust in Poland. A fourth had only recently discovered Jewish forebears and the probability of family losses in Poland, but did not know any details.

Interestingly, many spoke about the ruptures or losses caused by the Holocaust[62] which related to their going on the *March of the Living*, but did not represent this as needing healing. I shall return to this in 4.14 'Closure, Absence, Continuity' below.

Where healing was seen as somewhat pertinent, it was linked to the de-briefings the group was to have each night, to seeking forgiveness, to "forgive but not forget", to remembering, to "a cleansing" by being in Israel after Poland, and to letting emotions out by crying.

4.12 Emotions

The majority of the interviewees expected the tour experience would be very emotional. All but three expressed fears. These included being overwhelmed by feelings – "I expect to be very traumatised" – or fear of not feeling – "I [fear I] wont take in the enormity". One man described his fear of strong feelings as "not a bad type of worried"; he saw that expressing his feelings by crying would be good – and better than "bottling it up". The men in particular mentioned expectations that they would cry (six of the eight men interviewed).

When prompted about the de-briefing sessions and whether they saw that they would assist in handling difficult emotions, only one interviewee positively anticipate that debriefing would help. In fact, de-briefing rated hardly any mention throughout the interviews, with some apprehension about their usefulness for them from at least two participants.

Other fears, expressed by six people, were around the very full schedule (see Appendix 6), the fear of being on the outside in the group (from one of the non-Jews), or of it all being too much of an organised tour for their

[62] See Kugelmass's (1996:211) observation that these tours are about healing ruptures. He says that as "secular rituals" they offer North American Jews the "healing of ruptures in the cultural system of knowing and through it, the promotion of group continuity".

preference. In answer to this question on fears, one person particularly brought up apprehension about seeing the actual physical remnants of the death camp victims, identifying the display of huge piles of shoes in particular.

4.13 Objects as memorial

Several people mentioned, in other contexts, the displays at the death camps of shoes and glasses, and anticipated that they would be emotionally very affected. This trepidation seemed to promise a combination of realisations around both the humanity of the individuals who were murdered and (by the way they are displayed) the huge numbers who were murdered.

One person in particular identified that for him, it was the objects on display that have particular significance. He himself has a large collection of such objects as a travelling museum – in his words, "a living exhibition" used in giving talks on the Holocaust. Each item belonged to an unknown Jewish adult or child. It is not even known if they are alive somewhere. So he observes,

> *They are frightening pieces – there is no closure on these pieces.*

4.14 Closure, absence, continuity

The lack of closure was a thread throughout the interviews. This is in the face of incalculable absence. As one interviewee said: "There was no-one there at the funeral [of the victims]". Another asked: "Who is there to build the tombstone, to remember the Jews, Poles and gypsies [who were killed"]? They expressed the need to address the void of the unnamed death, the non-existent grave, the gaps in the family tree, the 'might-have-beens':

> *I would have been Polish – if not for the Holocaust, Poland would have been my home.*

For some, the absence seemed located in themselves:

I want it [Holocaust memory] to become part of me.

And,

I have not felt suffering like they did – [I want] to feel what it was like for them.

Some interviewees were very personally affected by the absence of talking about the Holocaust in their families. One whose father's family suffered many losses in Poland spoke of the silence on his father's part about this – they were now going to go on the tour together. Another is slowly working with a seventy-year-old relative to enable his stories to unfold and not remain hidden forever. Another is going with some guilt for not having talked more before they died with relatives who survived Auschwitz.

For others, the absence was that of God. They could see that the tour may confront their faith about "why God lets these things happen".

Picking up the threads to bring continuity where there is apparently none seemed to be the motivation of many. This was expressed variously as:

I want to:

- *learn more so that I can pass it on to others*
- *be part of [those who suffered]*
- *find the names of lost family members*
- *meet the non-Jews who hid my family*
- *build unity between Christians and Jews.*

An apprehended absence was perceived in the dying out of survivors of the Holocaust. As one person put it:

At the seventieth anniversary [of the liberation of the death camps] there will be <u>no</u> survivors.

The company of survivors on the tour was an important component for many:

It is a privilege to meet survivors – it is their stories that are so evocative.

They make the unbelievable a bit more real – and, in their very survival, they are the thread of continuity with the past.

4.15 Survival and Israel

These strongly held senses of absence and loss were balanced by the interviewees' depiction of the tour as a "statement to the world". This was seen as a statement not only in terms of Holocaust denial, but also of survival of the Jews:

Here we are and getting stronger!

The comment was made that Hitler's attempt to annihilate the Jews did not succeed, and, linking this with Israel:

[Israel is] the one bit of good that came out of the Holocaust.

For another:

With Israel there will always be a place for Jews [if persecuted] to go.

As the large majority of the interviewees had strong ties with Israel, the visit there was looked forward to eagerly. Several were staying on longer to see friends and family. Only two were not going on to Israel at all, despite this being strongly recommended by the tour organisers.

The fact that the tour culminated in Israel was seen by interviewees (when prompted) as "seeing why Israel is so important to the Jewish people", and "strengthen[ing] my appreciation of Israel and Zionism". Regarding the schedule for Israel (see Appendix 6) the two national days of *Yom Hazikaron* and *Yom Ha'atzmaut* – mourning those who have died serving Israel, and then the next day celebrating Israel's independence – were mentioned in particular beyond other events. One interviewee saw that for him, *Yom Ha'atzmaut* could be very good "not to be a downer after the [Poland] trip", and the whole time in Israel one of "allowing the

shock to register" and do "some lighter things with people who had gone through the same [Poland] experience".

Summing up, one participant said regarding the Israel part of the tour:

> *[It is] the ultimate part of the tour – that's the way the programme was designed.*

4.16 Summary of themes and issues from the interviews before participants went

The participants anticipated they would be on an extraordinary journey – one that had much in common with a pilgrimage. The tour, they anticipated, would take them through personal transformation via an initial stage of emotional and even spiritual struggle and grieving. In Poland they would visit places where the absence of contemporary Jewish life and culture would be evident and where incomprehensible levels of atrocity had been perpetrated. They would see physical structures and objects that they expected would deepen the experience. These would elicit opportunities to enter into the suffering of those who had suffered and been murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators – to try and gain some understanding of what the victims might have felt; to try and comprehend the incomprehensible. For many, this aim was expressed in terms of "making it real" – to imprint it by occupying the physical and emotional spaces.

The tour was not seen as one of healing except for survivors or their families, or where there was a religious redemptive motivation.[63] Interviewees were in a sense rejecting the healing trope of the TRC. However, the journey was described in various ways as about connecting: the past and the future, the dead and the living.

[63] This was by the Christian participants interviewed.

Many mentioned tolerance understanding as linked with the tour. Yet their interviews broadly did not indicate a pluralist approach to the Holocaust, nor was there any consistency in relating it directly to life in apartheid South Africa. The context of the tour and the construction of Holocaust memory of the conflict in the Middle East between Jews and Arabs was only mentioned by one person.

Ceremonies such as the *March of the Living* itself were expected to be opportunities for enacting the past, and of commemoration. But interviewees also saw that this huge and very public international event could be a "March of Defiance", where the survival of Jews against Nazi attempts to totally destroy them is proclaimed. This was also linked with concerns about Jewish assimilation, contemporary anti-Semitism and Holocaust denialism. This mission of proclaiming Jewish survival was conflated with the second half of the tour: the trip to Israel. In terms of the pilgrimage metaphor, participants imagined this part of the experience would offer some forms of lightness or redemption – Israel as the place for recovery after visiting the painful past in Poland, the "one bit of good that came out of the Holocaust", and for now and the future, the haven for Jews in the face of persecution.

Upon their return, most participants expected that they would have a renewed sense of mission. This was broadly framed as coming out of their 'learning the lessons'. Some participants emblematically expressed this as "Never Again!"

"""""""

5 THEMES AND ISSUES FROM THE INTERVIEWS AFTER THE PARTICIPANTS RETURNED

Upon their return, thirteen of the original fourteen people were interviewed. (One of the group stayed on in Europe for an extended stay). The semi-structured dialogue used a series of prompts (Appendix 5.) Analysis of the interviews focused on themes emerging from discussion on the impact of the experience. These were themes of self-awareness about memory and memory construction, the way people imbued the landscape with certain meanings, the search for authenticity, perceived changes in themselves during the tour and upon return, and tolerance awareness. The biggest issue that arose was around dissatisfactions with the tour organisation and others' responses to this. Each of the above themes was reflected in this one issue alone.

I have identified striking commonalities and differences along with any areas that were reported as actively contested during the tour. People's use of certain imagery and their reported emotional states are quoted as part of further demonstrating people's meaning-making.

5.1 How was it?

People said things like:

> *When I came back people asked me – 'How was it?' – but when I started to answer, they didn't want to hear.*

For a husband and wife who went, "even their children" started saying: "Stop talking about Poland already". More than half the participants reported a sense akin to isolation on returning when they were unable to convey the experiences they had been through. Being back home for one participant who had not gone with her own immediate family was described as being "in a bubble".

For some this isolation stemmed from the perceived lack of interest or understanding from others. One person did not know how to tell others

that the tour was in fact not for her "awesome, emotionally horrific or life-changing". On the other hand, for others it was the sense of inadequacy of how to tell of these things that had moved them.

> *What do you talk about – the numbers, the shoes? Do I show a photo – and if so, of what? If you travel to Paris you bring back a photo of the Eiffel Tower – that is a pretty picture. These [photos of the tour] are not pretty pictures.*

5.2 Fixing the pictures

Taking photographs was the most common way people tried to record their experiences (eleven out of thirteen interviewed mentioned this.) For several of them this was an ambivalent effort–

> *What do you actually photograph? – I have a few [photos] with me in them, but it does not seem appropriate.*

One, who largely gave up using her camera, said that she ended up taking just a few "personal photos".

For the official tour photographer there were multiple dilemmas to address, at the same time as dealing with his strong emotional reactions on the spot. Apart from needing to take what were the expected group photos, he took a selection for himself as well – a more symbolic collection. An example was a chopped-down tree outside the gas chamber just starting to sprout the fresh green leaves of regeneration. Not all his photos were in colour – in fact, most were in black-and-white, which he saw as more appropriate. (This reflected the impression made by the iconic images of archival footage and photographs – colours seem like embellishment or iconoclasm.) But also for him, this was a reaction to the bright green grass and yellow flowers of spring in Poland. He saw these as so very bright only because they were "fertilised by human Jewish ash". He also grappled with what was appropriate to record in terms of specific sites. For example, he could not photograph the "four tons of ash with Jewish bones in them". "These", he said, "are for people

to go and see for themselves." Some places were just "too sore for me to photograph".

The few who attempted to write a journal (five reported this), mostly soon gave up anything but at most tried to keep track of where they went on any one day in the very full schedule. For the most part, this was a result of lack of time because of the schedule, but a sense of "How can you write these feelings?" was also expressed.

So, there was an overall questioning about what kind of form was needed for remembering. The value of photos which you may "look at once or twice and which will then lie in a drawer" was questioned. As one said:

> *Will my actual brain be good enough or do I need something else [to keep the memory alive]?*

For others, this was never in doubt:

> *What I saw will <u>never</u> leave my memory.*

5.3 Entering the suffering

"It's been a trip of emotion", said the same person. Strong features of people's experiences were of entering the suffering, of standing in other people's shoes. (Thirteen examples were given by eight different participants.) This process was chiefly about identifying as Holocaust victims or survivors, but rarely, if at all, as perpetrators or bystanders. (See also 5.5 'A "lesson in tolerance"?' below.)

A rare example of the bystander perspective was when one person reflected on what the villagers adjacent to Majdanek would have been thinking seeing thousands of people going in and noone coming out, and seeing and smelling the smokestack.

Occupying the physical spaces at the death camps or death camp memorials (notably the memorial at Belzec) evoked identifications with

victims. One person felt sheer panic whilst being with a large group in one of the gas chambers when the guide said: “And now we will close the door”. He fled.

Two people mentioned the sense of terror in the huge crowds on the *March of the Living* itself, fearing they would lose their husbands or other family members, and then the shock of recognising in themselves this reflection of history as played out millions of times by family members being forcibly separated.

The circumstances of the tour in other ways gave opportunities for people to identify with and enter these emotional spaces. One was the weather, which on the day of the march was seen as appropriately cold, grey and then rainy. Still uncomfortable despite layers of clothing and rain-jackets, several mentioned that they asked themselves how they would have been in just the thin cotton outfits that the camp victims had to wear. They recalled that in addition, the camp victims had to stand for hours upon hours in the outdoors for roll-call in far worse weather than the cool spring the tourists were experiencing.

5.4 The catharsis of discomfort and the politics of disappointment

This certainly wasn’t a tour for sissies!

Discomforts of many other kinds were inherent in the tour’s packed itinerary, the reported poor quality of the accommodation, the long hours and delays each day, the boring and often late food (the kosher food was flown in from Israel), the poor guide on one of the buses (“the guide was pathetic”, “an irritant like you wouldn’t believe”),[64] and the lack of services such as porters at hotels.

Every person interviewed commented, unprompted, at some length on these issues. This also emerged as one of the few areas where debate

[64] Six interviewees mentioned the poor guiding or lack of access to guides, such as having to share one guide across two buses.

was noted by the interviewees. The issues were presented as, on the one hand:

> *The tour must be jacked up – it was a disgrace!*

And on the other hand:

> *[We] didn't go there to have a luxury holiday – how dare they complain!*

The debate was whether there was a right to complain, given what the Holocaust victims had been through. Many interviewed (seven of the thirteen) took these discomforts as an opportunity to 'enter the suffering' more fully:

> *It didn't seem appropriate to complain – it gave us a taste of what it was like.*

One saw it as a symptom of how spoiled South Africans (presumably white South Africans) are:

> *So the food wasn't great, and maybe you had a shower when you wanted a bath, and you had to carry your suitcases up several flights of stairs, and the bus-driver got lost four times – but it was still food, it was still water… Spoilt South Africans need to realise…*

The issue around the tour discomforts and dissatisfactions was value for money for others:

> *These were issues hard to grapple with – we paid a lot of money [for this tour][65] – I could probably not afford it as well as most – but I could also see both sides.*

The same person, unpacking the issue further, quoted some people's attitude as:

> *But we're not here to empathise with how people starved.*

[65] The tour for adults was R21 000 for twelve days. Tips, taxes and insurance were extra. The young people's delegation was subsidised by *March of the Living International.*

As the complaining amongst the participants continued on one of the buses, one of the interviewees got angry with her fellow passengers from another angle:

> *There was all this moaning and groaning on the bus, and trying to get others to get up and go and complain – no-one wanted to do anything, and I said it – you must get up and [speak out] and do!*

What she saw as disempowered behaviour struck a chord with her about the need to learn the lessons of the Holocaust and not just be bystanders. She developed this further by saying we must say loudly about any form of intolerance wherever it may occur:

> *Never Again!*

5.5 A "lesson in tolerance"?

The South African *March of the Living* tour leader, a tolerance educator, had, in the words of one interviewee:

> *Tried to inculcate us with a view on tolerance, to seek out all injustice, all intolerance and to be more tolerant ourselves.*

Yet the pervasive circumstance of the first part of the tour – that it took place in Poland – did not appear to offer those interviewed with opportunities for deepening tolerance, by 'standing in Polish shoes'. Instead, interviewees often depicted Poles as the Other.

There were thirteen negative mentions about the Polish people (this was from six different people.) The Poles they saw while on the tour were described as: "uptight – they don't talk", "very serious", "bitter and aggressive", "cold", "looking ashamed", "seeing a group of Jews and just seeing money coming into the country". One person said he did not particularly feel like spending money in Poland. The accompanying rabbi noted that on a previous tour they had had firecrackers thrown at their group. Another who was particularly negatively affected said:

> *I saw an old Polish man sitting on a bench and I wondered – where were you and what were you doing [during the war].*

He added baldly:

> *I can't stand them [Poles]. [The tour leader] wanted us to go there and learn tolerance – I didn't.*

Kugelmass (1992:399) noted from his respondents a "hyperconsciousness of the gaze of Poles". He further commented on similar kinds of incidents that "these are the experiences these visitors expect to have in Poland, and because they confirm deeply held convictions, they are almost a desired part of the trip" (1992:396).

The negative attitudes extended to the Polish countryside itself:

> *My sister who visited said she found Poland beautiful. I only found it grey and grim – there was nothing appealing about it.*

Another recounted:

> *We were near a forest when I felt the hair on my back stand up. I <u>knew</u> there had been a massacre there.*

He later added:

> *I understand there were one million people murdered in Polish forests…. No forest is innocent of massacre.*

The same person described Poland as a "mass graveyard".

One person acknowledged the Polish government's role in preserving Auschwitz. Otherwise, official Polish memorialisation was seemingly invisible to interviewees. It should be noted that the initial preserving of the site and creating of a museum by the then-communist government, had "an overtly political appropriation" of "interpreting the Holocaust as a Polish [i.e. non-Jewish] tragedy" (Lennon and Foley 2000:52).

People spoke directly of the collaboration of Poles with the Nazis and the Poles' perceived failure to acknowledge fully their responsibility for the past. Interestingly, some of the same people also commented on the

numbers of Poles who were non-Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust. There were six to seven million Poles killed – about 22 per cent of the pre-war population. Of those about three million were Jews. (Gregory 2000:41).

Some people made a point of saying that not all Poles were bad, and acknowledged the huge Polish losses. Three mentioned the courage of the so-called 'Righteous Gentiles' who had hidden and rescued Jews. There had been a talk by two such people telling their stories, which was specifically mentioned as very affecting by these three interviewees.

5.6 "Time out of time"[66]

In stark contrast to the others interviewed, one interviewee was very disappointed that there was a lack of Polish history during the tour. He said "they have had their own very interesting history – and transformation – that I would like to have heard about". The tour, as with most of its kind, followed an itinerary of sites significant to Jewish history in Poland (see Appendix 6.) This included Jewish cemeteries, synagogues and towns; and the death camps of Majdanek, Belzec, Auschwitz and Birkeneau; and other memorials such as at the Warsaw ghetto site, as well as Schindler's factory.

The tour was a visit to the past – as time disconnected from the present. As Lennon and Foley put it – it is a visit to "'another country'" in more senses than one (2000:31). Kugelmass (1992:396) argues that these visitors "go as antiquarians rather than ethnographers – consequently they bring back… no experiences that deepen their knowledge of the local culture".

[66] Kugelmass (1992:405), in a somewhat different sense, describes the "time out of time quality" of such tours with people doing things they normally avoid at home, and with a very rigorous schedule. He continues: "This very liminality suggests that what they are experiencing is charged with meaning"

Only one interviewee particularly mentioned the richness of Jewish life in Poland as an unexpected early high note for her. Others empathised, rather, with the sad sense of the huge loss of Jewish culture and achievement. However, for most people, the focus was more centrally on the sites of more direct significance to Holocaust memory, and the enormity of the loss of Jewish lives.[67] This was what they had come on the tour for.

The site most mentioned was Majdanek, the death camp they visited late on their first day of arrival in Poland. The second most mentioned was Belzec that is a death camp site cleared by the Nazis to hide their acts of atrocity before liberation. Since 2004, there has been a singular memorial at Belzec, which had major impacts on a few of the interviewees.

5.7 The reach for authenticity

One interviewee differentiated clearly between the "realistic reflection" of the Majdanek memorial site and the "symbolic reflection" of the Belzec memorial. The "realistic reflection"[68] of Majdanek was very powerful for many, especially as it was the first death camp they visited and it was on their first day in Poland:

> *We were thrown into it almost.*

For one person, in strong contrast to others interviewed, Majdanek was "a very poor memorial if I can say". He found it very basic – and compared it with the *Yad Vashem* Museum in Israel, which "has interactives and is more twenty-first century". But he added: "Maybe [these memorials] <u>have</u> to be stark and basic".

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[67] Thus Jewish memory was in effect compacted to the particular years of Nazi persecution, thereby defining it as the pivotal event in many, many centuries of Jewish history.

[68] This camp has been preserved in a reconstituted way and with the addition of specific displays in different venues and a memorial. It should be noted that there are issues around authenticity for each of the sites of the death camps. Where there are original structures left, there have been changes made to some of the structures, to the boundaries, and to entrance ways, etc. (Lennon 2000:49). So in no case can a 'pure' authenticity be found.

The power of being in the places where atrocity took place was commented on by most. (One exception was: "Auschwitz was very moving, but I've seen it all in the movies before".) More common was the experience that having been to these places, one now knew.

> *Even if I've studied it and seen the footage it's not the same. And I don't only mean the same in a moving way; it's the actual size, the scale and what they looked like. I can say now I know.*

The "impact of seeing where people were and what they went through" was seen by one person as being very emphatically superior to monuments. He described it thus:

> *Monuments are beautiful and they are done beautifully – but they could be a chunk of concrete anywhere.*

He added that they are "lifeless".

One person said, by contrast, how she found the "symbolic reflection" of Belzec[69] "very powerful". She described the

> *burnt-out charred rock, spread over the whole area, which showed the destruction and devastation… So bleak, no life, no greenery – totally devoid of any kind of life.*

She continued:

> *You walk down [the corridor] and it's like an abyss – the walls just close in on you.*

Another interviewee had "a very bad reaction" at Belzec, when she felt totally overwhelmed with emotions, and entered what might be described as an 'altered state', as described below.

[69] The memorial at Belzec was built on the razed site of the death camp. It features an upward sloping field of volcanic rock, which is penetrated by a concrete channel that slants into the hill and ends at a wall commemorating the dead. The only way out is the channel and narrow stairs to left or right.

5.8 "A reality more real than real"[70]

As I approached and saw the rocks I saw [in the rock] a sea of faces – then when I entered the corridor, I felt the walls closing in on me… It was a feeling of a whole lot of children all around me, all trying to get to me and grabbing on to me… I saw their faces and they had empty eyes… I felt I had no way to release these souls… Things closed in on me then very badly.

Whilst others did not have such intense experiences as this person, three other people commented on instances of being lifted out of ordinary consciousness:

[We were at one of the death camps walking along] and I said to my companion – I can smell chloroform! I didn't know where we were. And then it turned out we were near the gas chamber.

One saw symbols in the chimneys at Birkeneau:

At Birkeneau [the wood from the barracks was used after the war, so] there are just chimneys – hundreds of them left standing – a whole field of chimneys. And it came to me it was like Hosea 13:14 which says 'O death where is your victory, O death where is your sting?'

And the same person saw symbols in the multitudes of Israeli flags in which many young people wrapped themselves.

Brought to mind [the Song of Solomon 6:4 which says]: 'You are terrible as a bannered host'… meaning the flags of Israel proclaim that the nation and people of Israel live. In Hebrew, 'Am Y'srael Chai'.

Another example of being lifted out of the ordinary was the Friday night Shabbat service at the synagogue.[71] One interviewee, who had described

[70] Kugelmass (1992:402), with a different sense, observes that in travel to "recreated places and moments in history, [there is something] that seeks a reality more real than real".

himself as a non-observant Jew, found it the "most moving thing" being in this space which had been gutted as a synagogue, being used again, and his being part of the service:

> *I felt the dead were watching. The spirits were rising. There was what we say in Hebrew, 'a rauch' – a spirit.*

For some at this same Shabbat service or the dinner that followed, a feeling of upliftment and even joy was specifically expressed. At least eight of the thirteen interviewed reported this experience during aspects of the tour. For most interviewed, this joy was linked with the *March of the Living* itself.

5.9 The march itself

The march from Auschwitz to Birkeneau on *Yom Ha'Shoah,* with nearly twenty-one thousand people from seventy countries around the world, was the centrepiece of the twelve-day *March of the Living* tour. Unexpected, then, was the finding that it was not the first thing interviewees spoke about when recounting their most memorable experiences. Also unexpected was that nearly half the interviewees needed to be prompted by the interviewer to talk about the march at all (six out of thirteen.)

For participants, when they did speak about it, the main surprise was that the march was one of joy and triumph – not the sombre, silent, eight-abreast commemorative walk they had anticipated. Instead it was "uplifting, energising, vibey", and "joyful". The procession was not orderly, in that people broke ranks to link up with others and to take photographs, and young people were "trading mementoes". Most of the flags people carried were Israeli and this was reported by one interviewee as being seen as contentious by some in the crowd. They wanted to see other nations' flags too.

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[71] This was the day after the *March of the Living* took place and the second-last day in Poland.

Whilst four of the interviewees were particularly positive about the joyful spirit of the march, two found this negative. Another expressed his ambivalence:

> *I had a strange feeling about the march – maybe a bit of a joyous atmosphere – lots of talking and shouting. I cannot decide if it was good or bad.*

The weather on the day itself was described as "very unpleasant" – grey, cold and raining. However, (as commented in 5.3 'Entering the suffering' above) this was seen by most as appropriate – "quite symbolic". It was even seen as an act of divine intervention by one non-observant Jew:

> *As we were gathering at Auschwitz for the march, it started raining. The spiritual side of you had to wonder – you appreciate that there is a God perhaps.*

Only one found the "weather against it", although he was joined by several other interviewees in commenting on the discomforts of the march and the ceremony afterwards – the long delays and the lack of seating, water or toilets on this very lengthy day.[72] The ceremony which followed at Birkeneau – addressed by Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, Holocaust survivor Eli Wiesel[73] and the Polish and Hungarian heads of state, interspersed with rousing music – was more commonly held to be "very impressive" and "most moving".

Overall, interviewees saw both the march and the ceremony, as particularly noted for their sense of triumph and survival:

> *There were just so many Jews there – alive and well.*

And:

[72] One interviewee described it as getting up at 4 a.m. and getting back to bed only at 1 a.m. the next day.

[73] Eli Wiesel is a Hungarian Jewish Holocaust survivor and Nobel Prize-winning human rights activist and writer resident in the United States.

It was the most moving thing for me here at the camp where Hitler wanted to wipe out the Jewish nation, when everyone sang 'Hatikva', the Jewish national anthem.

Other moments of great impact for some on the march were:

- Noting the number of non-Jews there – it was estimated at 25 per cent of the overall group. Included was the observation of a journalist who had been to several *Marches of the Living* before, that there were "many more Polish than in any previous years".
- The ceremony of the reading out of the names of the dead as the marchers entered Birkenau.
- Eli Wiesel's speech. (Three people identified this.)
- The singing of 'My Yiddishe Mama' by a world-famous cantor – "a tearjerker wherever you hear it".
- Looking back and seeing more than twenty-thousand marching, and realising that this was the same number as the Nazis killed on any one day in the camps – "It could have been us".

5.10 "Staring evil in the face"[74]

The interviewees returned again and again to the "mind-boggling" numbers of deaths as a result of "the Nazi killing machine". This included being appalled at the efficiency of this machine and the sheer number of resources that went into developing and maintaining it:

And for what? What did [Hitler] want to achieve?

One even said that it was so hard to believe, "that one could almost understand Holocaust denial".

The sight of hundreds of thousands of shoes in a display area at Majdanek in one of the barracks deeply affected many people. Six of the interviewees specifically selected this to describe to the interviewer.

[74] The tour leader described the Poland part of the tour as "staring evil in the face".

When you see the shoes, that's when the magnitude really gets to you.

For many it was in the crematoria and the gas chambers – as one person described it, "the heart of the machine" – that they had to deal with the sense of enormity the most.

It was quite frightening to see the showerheads, to see the blue[75] *and the scratch marks on the walls. It was quite terrible.*

For others, it was the tons and tons of human ash at Majdanek and Birkeneau:

I saw the ash… I saw bone. I thought – these are people!

In the face of "all this death, death, death"[76] it is little surprise that some of the participants turned away to the stories recounted on the tour – most particularly the stories of survivors.

5.11 Survivors and survival

Having a survivor on the tour with them, Dr Yagel, was regarded as very special. (Eight of the thirteen interviewed mentioned this.) In the words of one:

He made the tour.

Participants were able to hear his stories first hand, especially if they were on the same bus. A couple of people noticed his changing as the tour progressed:

He was finally able to let it go – what he had been carrying around with him all his life.

Survivors have a special place in Jewish Holocaust memory. Some interviewees expressed it as a sense of urgency to value survivors while they were still here:

[75] From the Zyklon B gas.
[76] In the words of one interviewee.

In ten years' time [if they have a special anniversary march again] there will be no survivors.

The sense of loss of continuity was coupled with the loss of their stories if they were never told:

[I have been doing this family tree work] and showed it to my cousin in Israel who is a survivor. It was painful for her. It's so painful for her to tell the stories.

The Holocaust survivors are emblematic of the overall survival of the Jews. In the words of one interviewee:

They send a strong message – we survived.

This triumph of the survival of the Jews and the state of Israel was also firmly linked (if not conflated) by the interviewees.

5.12 Israel as victory

Israel is a victory – it still is.

This was how one interviewee described Israel. As the culmination of the *March of the Living* tour, all interviewees were very positive about their time there. Their experiences in Israel were reported as positive without exception (although many interviewees needed to be prompted to talk about this part of the tour and the ceremonies in which they participated.) The food and weather even improved!

The two who did not go on to Israel from Poland expressed some regret. Others reflected that they "would have been depressed, I guess [if I did not finish the tour there]".

The contrast between what the Poland part of the tour represented and what the Israel part of the tour represented was summed up for most as:

From the sadness to the happiness.

Several depicted themselves as seeing Israel in a newly affirmed way, particularly around Holocaust memory. (Four mentioned this.) For example:

> *If it weren't for the Holocaust, maybe there would be no Israel. Maybe this is why we had to have the Holocaust.*

And:

> *Maybe I used to take Israel for granted – [a good place to visit… but now I see] Israel is a place where in time of trouble, I can turn to.*

Several interviewees repeated this image of Israel as a haven for Jews should anything like the Holocaust threaten again.

The Arab-Israeli conflict was largely absent from the interviewees' representations of Israel. One acknowledged the fighting of factions within the state of Israel:

> *Israel with all its problems – the religious fighting the secular, the settlers against the government…*

He added:

> *We need a strong Israel [more than ever].*

It was two non-Jews who mentioned the Palestinians and contestation around the issues of land (albeit in one case only obliquely.) One Jewish interviewee did feel her sensitivity to discrimination had been affected during the tour when she

> *saw Arabs in Israel as waiters – in subservient positions. I wondered how they must feel.*

But largely, the time spent in Israel, which included the two significant ceremonies of *Yom Hazikaron* and *Yom Ha'atzmaut,* was portrayed in the interviews as a place of recovery:

> *To get the tears out of my mind and the fog out of my brain.*

Israel was also portrayed as a place of triumph. So when people left Israel there was a sense of sadness. One expressed it as:

> *So my heart remains a little bit in Jerusalem.*

However, she continued:

> *But I am a South African – a South African Jew.*

5.13 Bringing it home

This sense of being a South African Jew was highlighted in two accounts of an event shared by many of the tour participants. This was the occasion when, led by Mpho Tsedu, an accompanying journalist from *The Star* newspaper, the South African group, whilst marching in Jerusalem Old City, struck up the song 'Shosholoza'.

Contextualising their experiences of Holocaust memory within their South African experience, six interviewees commented on the links they saw with apartheid in South Africa and its legacy of prejudice and division on race lines. Commenting specifically on a violent incident that happened in the neighbourhood upon his return, and observing people's rush to categorise the culprits, one participant observed:

> *You realise what prejudice does and the tolerance that is needed to try not to categorise people. The transition takes time, [however].*

Another reflected:

> *You see people suffering here in South Africa – perhaps on the side of the road or on TV – you see inequity and injustice and it brings me back to my experiences in Poland.*

One of these six, however, perceived "reverse racism" as taking hold in South Africa, and said that he would fight this. Another person related what happened in the Holocaust to the suffering during the "Boer War" (South African war) and not to apartheid at all. (This was a Jewish and not an Afrikaans person.)

There were no accounts given of seeing parallels between being a collaborator or a bystander on the part of the Poles during the war, and the same attitude of many whites in South Africa during apartheid. However, having said that, others had returned to South Africa with a renewed sense of mission that included addressing intolerance at home.

5.14 Mission and personal transformation

With regard to bringing a message of tolerance specifically back to the South African context, there were two interviewees who called for action in the future for greater unity between whites and blacks (for the anniversary of June 16th – one person), or between blacks and Jews (one person.) Two interviewees expressed a very strong sense of mission when they returned to become active around issues of genocide in Africa or "wherever it may happen". One of the same two realised he had been "slipping" into xenophobic attitudes towards Mozambican and Zimbabwean refugees, which he aimed to keep in check. Another talked about being more prepared to speak up against discrimination or stereotyping whenever she witnessed it. This was particularly after a racist remark about black South Africans made to her in Israel by a British man, when she uncharacteristically "really gave it to him".

In total, these commitments to a specific mission around tolerance issues locally, came from four of the interviewees. This was in contrast to seven overall that reported a sense of deepened tolerance awareness. In other words, the experiences on the tour, or this awareness did not appear to translate directly into the way in which people envisaged their mission now that they had returned.

Instead, seven saw themselves giving talks – even "little house meetings", and two indeed had already done so by the time of the interviews. The talks were about the tour, and characteristically were at

their *shul,* or in the case of the two from a Christian-based Messianic fellowship, with their faith group.

One, who had a very specific mission to "release the souls of the children" she had witnessed at Belzec, was passionately committed to this task and saw potential for engaging children here with a commemoration process. For the two non-Jews involved with *Christian Friends for Israel* there was a sense of an ongoing mission around building links in Israel and across Christian and Jewish lines, as well as continuing "to Witness the outworking of the prophecies of the Bible" which was inherent in their faith.

Support for Israel was affirmed for several:

> *My support for Israel is stronger than ever. [Pointing to the Israeli flag newly displayed in his office:] That's why that is there – to remind me every time I walk in.*

This was linked with a stronger Jewish identity:

> *Maybe yes – I have the awakening of a more Jewish feeling and would like maybe to explore that a bit. The combination of Poland and Israel did that for me.*

Another said:

> *Now I know more who I am and where I come from and what I stand for.*

Another:

> *[After the march and then in Israel, the feeling] kept on going up – my Zionist feelings were much more strengthened.*

Only two positively called this a life-changing event. This was in contrast to the anticipation for personal transformation by six people before they went on the tour, and how the tour was framed. One said that he had come back not so much with an outward mission as with an inner process of becoming aware of a new perspective on things:

Yes, material things are great, but they can be taken away in an instant… I think I value people a lot more.

Some seemed far less sure of what to do with the experiences they had had – and were going to wait and see what developed, probably continuing their Holocaust studies. Some were still dealing with their experiences, the strong and sometimes very unexpected reactions they were having.

5.15 Reactions afterwards

At least three people of the group interviewed were experiencing major reactions to the tour. Two of these described themselves as "traumatised". One of these was seeking therapy from a specialist counsellor in Holocaust memory and was on medication. The other was experiencing depression and nightmares nightly.

A third person had a severe reaction to perceived anti-Semitism in a cartoon in a local weekly paper, and in her role as part of a pro-Israeli media advocacy group took the editor to task, calling the newspaper "neo-Nazi". This was all played out publicly in the newspaper's pages and in private communications between herself and the editor. Part of the reaction she felt stemmed from an exaggerated sense of, in her own words, "helplessness and powerlessness" as a result of the trip to the Holocaust sites. She even put it, upon seeing the cartoon, as:

My God! Am I back in Poland?

Although there was peer support for her reading of the cartoon as anti-Semitic and reminiscent of the propaganda used by the Nazis and neo-Nazis of today, she regarded hers as an overreaction that was very upsetting. She also saw it as tactically unwise as an advocate. At the time of the interview, she had resolved to withdraw from this form of advocacy.

A fourth person who had the extreme experience at Belzec of seeing the host of "lost souls of children" and felt them "grabbing on to her" still felt enormously affected by the whole experience. Her huge sense of urgency to do something for their souls to be put to rest weighed on her.

A fifth person, who described his experience of going without direct family members as "traumatising", said he needed de-briefing.

The fact that no de-briefing took place on the tour (apart from one group's all-night session and another "inappropriate" attempt by the guide who was received so negatively) was ascribed by interviewees to the sheer lack of time. The schedule often resulted in getting people back to their accommodation late at night.

One person said:

We didn't have time for de-briefing – or even to talk to each other.

It appeared that even the time on the buses was often taken up with videos or formal talks.

Three people said categorically that de-briefing was needed on the tour. This relatively small number reflected the apparent lack of enthusiasm for de-briefing in the earlier interviews. (See reference to this in 4.12 'Emotions' above.) Yet, the need to talk about their experiences seemed to be borne out by at least two people[77] reporting very positively on the de-briefing sessions held in Johannesburg after they got back.

It was great to hear about the feelings and responses of others from the tour – and that I was not alone in my reactions.

People also found it good to be back with the group again – as it was here that they could talk about the things they'd seen and felt.

[77] At the time of interviewing this de-briefing had not yet occurred for some, so there is no overall sense of how positively the sessions were received.

Reflection was definitely not part of a tour like this while it was happening. As one person said,

> *[With a large group like this] there was a lot of rushing and getting.*

Another said:

> *There were so many people moving in and moving out [of the museum areas at the death camps]… there can be no gravity possible when hundreds are queuing up.*

Of those canvassed, six people said that if they did such a tour again they would do it on a smaller scale, in a smaller group or on their own. This would be variously "at a more leisurely pace", or "seeing a few things well".

Some had really not reflected much at all about the tour since they came back (see 6.1 'How was it?' above.) But they remained haunted by flashbacks, and by being 'triggered' by certain objects:

> *I can't look at shoes the same way any more. Someone else told me they had a similar experience looking at showerheads.*

Another described what comes to his mind now:

> *One or two things stand out for me: the mound of one hundred thousand people's ash and the shoes – just piles upon piles of them.*[78]

The same person continued:

> *You just walk up and down – there's thousands and thousands of them. And – <u>I think they have done this on purpose</u> – there is one red shoe – a child's shoe.*[79]

[78] This was at Majdanek.
[79] My emphasis here.

5.16 Transparency

The above observation, "I think they have done this on purpose", was a rare one from an interviewee. The ways in which the representations had been constructed at the sites visited and the ceremonies enacted were not commonly mentioned.

However, the large dissatisfaction with the tour's organisation, the food, the poor guide, the delays and so on certainly made this aspect of the tour and its 'construction' transparent (if only by its gaps and fractures.) Having said that, people did consider 'what worked for them' and 'what didn't' – in terms of monuments or preserved sites, objects or ceremonies (see in particular 5.7 'The reach for authenticity' and 5.9 'The march itself' above.) But based on the interviews, it appeared to be exceptional for there to be explicit consciousness about the authors behind the scenes. Two interviewees gave the examples that follow.

As those on the march entered Birkeneau, there was the calling out of names of victims. Several people had found this very moving, but one person said:

> *That was very touching in the beginning, but after one-and-a-half hours I had had enough. There were certain things that were overkill – but I understand what they were trying to do.*

Reflecting on the overall shape of the tour – from Poland to Israel – one person said:

> *[Israel] is the ultimate part of the tour – that's the way the programme was designed.* [80]

He also noted:

> *[The tour is] organised in a very good way – you really get the feeling of the happiness and the sadness.*

[80] This was in the first interview.

The same person observed:

> *The tour was very tiring – draining mentally, emotionally, physically. That's absolutely the name of the game if you like.*

Kugelmass refers to this rigorous schedule frequently, noting that it contributes to the journey's "time-out-of-time quality" (1992:405). He also refers to a non-Jewish commentator who goes further to suggest that the "frightful pace [of such tours] was intentionally designed to instill a negative sense of place [in Poland]" (Kugelmass 1992:396).

5.17 Reality eludes

Powerful as experiences had been for most of those interviewed, the aspirations expressed in the first interviews to "make it real" or to have it "become part of them" still seemed to be elusive. For some, it was a sense of:

> *It will still take me a while to get to all the feelings.*

For others, it was

> *coming down to earth.*

For one it was:

> *When you come back, you step back from the tour and you see it – the enormity of [the Holocaust].*

Some were particularly pleased to meet up again with others at the de-briefing to share stories and feelings.

> *You have a different quality of contact with people on a tour like this – not like on a Kon-Tiki tour.*

This person, like one or two others, felt keenly the desire to keep contact – although there was also the fear that this would not last:

> *Will I ever see again the amazing people I got to know on this tour? [Things change] when you get back to work, the usual routine.*

Re-visiting the memory of the *March of the Living* tour took the form of writing down the story, or sorting and editing the photographs, reading the dozens of books they'd brought back and telling other people, or of wanting to hear other versions, to see others' photos or videos. For one it was coming full circle – to see how the media covered the event:

I want to see the coverage. I want to make it more real.

5.18 Summary of themes and issues

Return for many of those interviewed had a quality of being isolated, even traumatised, and for some a recurring sense of yearning for an immediacy of experience that still eluded them. There was disquiet about their own under-reactions or over-reactions. There was concern about how to express and how to preserve the memories of the tour, and a lack of clarity about what 'mission' they may undertake as a result.

Very few people could perceive in themselves huge personal transformation at the stage of being interviewed. Certainly, in the strong emotions they felt on the tour, some participants reportedly felt catharsis and affirmation of their identity and purpose. And yet, the dissatisfactions with the organisation of the tour appeared to be the most central issue people wanted to talk about. Some commentators have observed, as did some of those interviewed, that this rigorous schedule was really what it was all about. This <u>was</u> the trip – in which the desired experiences of grief and shock, of empathy with those who suffered, and the politics of disappointment could be played out.

The discontent with the tour and the debate around it was potentially a fracturing of the "time out of time" container or "bubble" [81] that the tourists inhabited. This manifested as people engaging in vigorous dialogue around the purpose and the construction of the tour. However, in other

[81] Using Valene Smith's term "tourist bubble", Kugelmass (1992:402) refers to the visitors as being "physically in a place but 'outside' the culture" This was one aspect of the "container".

ways the *March of the Living* tour as a shaped and even scripted[82] product was not at issue. Time to reflect in any sense was very constrained and the promised de-briefings did not happen (except later in Johannesburg after their return.)

So opportunities to explore – let alone contest – history and memory as they were represented were not built in to the tour. The tolerance agenda and how it played out were unclear from the interviews. What was clear was that the participants in their interviews did not generally present a pluralist or inclusive worldview, either focusing on the Holocaust or on their tolerance and anti-racism awareness. In terms of changes in tolerance awareness, several saw Poles and Poland in a negative light. One reported that they came back with an increased and extreme negativity towards Poles. This was in a context of attempts to build rapprochement between Jews and Poles in Poland and elsewhere, with some of this being covered in the training programme. So the participants would at least have been aware of this being 'on the table'.

The joyous and triumphant march, although it was not the unequivocal highlight of the tour, was pivotal in turning the narrative towards its redemptive conclusion in Israel. There was only one comment in the interviews that gave a problematised view of Israel; however, this was in terms of internal factionalism in Israel and not Israeli-Arab relations.

"""""""

6 INTERVIEWS WITH TOUR COMMENTATORS

This chapter analyses interviews with five commentators who have particular expertise relevant to the tour. These included the tour leader, the tour coordinator, the accompanying rabbi and a human rights educator who went as a participant. They brought perspectives to the *March of the Living* tour that were different from those of the participants. The themes and issues arising from the reported experiences of these tour commentators have been further developed through a fifth interview with a researcher in South African memorialisation processes, who is a South African Jew who has thought deeply about Holocaust memory processes.

The themes of competing agendas, particularly around 'a good way to memorialise' and tolerance education, are highlighted.

6.1 Ways of remembering

The South African researcher who is a Jew observed:

> *Jews have a very particular way of remembering – it's a damn good way… that [entails] the same over time, repeatedly… and with the injunction – never forget, always remember.*

She added:

> *When Jews remember the Holocaust, they not only remember the Holocaust, they remember every hurt or ill done to Jews since [their early history] – plus their expulsion from Spain, Portugal, England, the Inquisition. It is so powerful because every event is linked with events that came before, and in your mind, to events that may still happen.*

For many, many Jews this remembrance of suffering is "basically imprinted on you if you are Jewish".[83] Many Jews like the interviewee

[83] The interviewee here referred to Susan Sontag's (2002) *Regarding the Pain of Others*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux.

have direct experiences of the impact of the Holocaust on individuals in their families:

> *I have lost at least forty family members to the Holocaust. I lived with my aunt who was a Holocaust survivor and heard her waking up screaming with nightmares every night.*

She continued:

> *So it infused and informed every aspect of my life. When we didn't finish our meals, we would be reminded not of the starving children in Biafra – but of our Jewish relatives who had been deprived and starved in the Holocaust.*

This "kind of marking, this kind of scarring", she claimed, is the way of remembering the pain – and bringing it repeatedly into the present.

6.2 Time and narrative

Much of this remembering is intrinsic to the Jewish religious and secular calendars. In terms of the *March of the Living,* the tour is hitched to two key days in the calendar: *Yom Ha'Shoah,* on which the march from Auschwitz to Birkeneau in Poland is re-enacted, and then the march on the Day of Independence in Israel, *Yom Ha'atzmaut*. These two are a week apart and in between falls *Yom Hazikaron,* the day of mourning for those who have died in the struggle for Israel's survival. As the tour leader said, "the tour is built in a very good way with the dates".

As illustrated earlier in this report, these special days and the ceremonies associated with them are pivotal in a greater story that has been described variously as:

> *In Poland you are stuck in the death – Israel is all about life.*[84]

Or, in the words of the tour promotional leaflet:

[84] The tour leader's words said particularly in relation to the advice for *March of the Living* participants to end the tour in Israel.

[Poland] the richness and anguish of the past; [Israel] the hope of the future.[85]

Furthermore, this linear progression is strongly recommended to participants – and is seen as inherently linked with the individual tour participants' well-being:

It is crucial for participants to end up in Israel – Poland is very hard – very hard emotionally, so if you don't go to Israel you don't feel the high.

In this way, tour participants are encouraged to enact – even embody – this meta-narrative. The tour coordinator depicted it as:

Every step in Poland you see what you have lost. Every step in Israel makes you grateful for what you have got.

6.3 "Stepping into the spaces of darkness"[86]

As with other interviewees, the tour commentators who went on the tour repeatedly spoke about the emotional impact of taking this journey. At the time of the visits to the Holocaust sites, there was the "incredible depth of pain and the fear of confronting it amongst people". Emotions, it was observed, changed over time – from fear to shock, from shock to anger, from anger to guilt. On occasions, "we just cried and held one another on the bus".

For one commentator, upon her return, there were distressing flashbacks related to sights she had seen – such as barbed wire, showerheads, even having her hair cut. Accompanying this was a general sense of guilt and depression: "I feel morose and gloomy… and unable to talk about my experiences to others who were not on the tour – even to my sister".

[85] *March of the Living* promotional leaflet entitled: "Embrace the Past – Grasp the Future", (ca. 2005).
[86] Words of the human rights educator who went on the tour to describe the time in Poland.

For the tour organisers, these experiences often had to be dealt with in combination with logistical crises, and the demands of others' individual needs. The tour leader, who lost family in the Holocaust and whose father had been a Schindler's list survivor, was also aiming to tell stories of her family at different stages of the journey. Each of the tour organisers said they often had less than two hours' sleep per night, and frequently did not eat. "It was crazy, crazy." The tour leader readily admitted that the organisation was "chaos".

6.4 Organisational context and vicarious experience

Logistics were difficult with almost twenty-one thousand people in Poland for this sixtieth anniversary *March of the Living*. The tour leader observed: "Poland was not equipped for this". All food was flown in from Israel,[87] sometimes people only getting food at midnight. Polish hotel accommodation was "poor". By contrast, there was a competing VIP tour offered to handpicked South Africans – staying at the best hotels and travelling with three chefs. Both the tour organisers disagreed with this venture. In the words of one:

> *How appropriate is it to have lavish meals and accommodation?*

The tour leader called it

> *doing Auschwitz in style!*

She saw that while the organisation of *March of the Living* may have been challenging, it added to the discomfort and therefore the experience that they had of the emotionally charged atmosphere, in contrast with the luxury tour.

6.5 Learning through emotions

Identification with the suffering of the victims (whether as a result of visiting Holocaust sites or through the disappointments and discomforts around tour organisation) is clearly an anticipated, even hoped-for

[87] The reason for this was to keep *kosher* as these facilities were not provided in Poland.

outcome of this kind of tour experience. This is particularly so, perhaps, for the *March of the Living* tour. In the words of the tour leader:

> *While tours like this are happening to Poland all the time, none can even match or compare with the emotional hype of the 'March of the Living'.*[88]

The tour leader continued by saying that, with all this "hype and hysteria," "at the same time it is very effective". Later, she conceded:

> *It is a very emotive trip. I struggle myself sometimes – is it the right thing? But it is effective and it does change people – usually towards tolerance.*

If one of the aims of tour participation is to learn greater tolerance – this was certainly high on the agenda of the tour leader who is a tolerance educator – then the question needs to be asked: How do people change and become more tolerant, and how do you construct a tour that promotes this? For the tour leader, in part this emerged as steeping people in the facts and places of suffering in Poland, and immersing them in the emotional ceremonies of mourning and survival featured on the tour. However, for the human rights educator who went on the tour, "the only way we become tolerant and free of prejudice is by confronting our capacity to do wrong – our own shadow side". The approach taken by him and the tour leader in their tolerance work in South Africa with governments and community groups, they both described as confrontational – "pushing [participants] not so gently – into owning stuff" – a very focused and personal method of learning about yourself and your attitudes.

On similar lines, the public memory researcher[89] commented:

[88] She said this particularly in view of the significant calendrical days of remembrance (see 6.2 'Time and narrative' above).
[89] The fifth tour commentator.

These things [learning about human rights] need to be dealt with not in an airy-fairy way. It needs to be in your face. You need to put yourself on the line.

Although she had not been on the *March of the Living* tour, she did not believe that discussion went on there about such things as:

[People asking themselves] "What would I have done? Would I have stood up?"

Instead, the effectiveness of the tolerance agenda of this *March of the Living* seemed to hinge on the anticipation that through participants' feeling the suffering of others strongly,[90] they will translate this into changing their own lives and behaviour.

You go to these places and see man's inhumanity to man, and this can drive you to action – starting with your self, your biases, your attitudes to others. You can come back a different person, a better person. [91]

The tour leader saw that she supported the tolerance agenda by repeatedly raising the issue in the training preparing for the tour and upon their return, and through emphasising mechanisms such as the Pledge (Appendix 8.) She also encouraged participants to come home with some sense of mission.

Yet what sort of mission this would be was not defined. The tour leader saw that for some people, they might come back saying:

'Never Again' – but just for Jews.

One particular participant on the tour told her that "he came back hating more than when he left". Any attempts by her to try and change his mindset by correcting his versions of history, particularly around the

[90] It should be pointed out that this also had a traumatising effect for some people in terms of depression, nightmares, flashbacks and severe reactions to situations (see chapter 5, especially 5.15 'Reactions afterwards' and the other responses in this chapter).

[91] The words of the tour leader, talking not only about Holocaust sites, but also other places of genocide such as Rwanda.

Poles, or to appeal to him in other ways after the tour, did not succeed. After further consideration of this issue, the tour leader added:

> *People should be accountable [for] whatever action they want to take. It is not my role, or indeed my need, for people to do one thing or another. It must come from them.*

6.6 Place, narrative and tolerance

The other potential way the tolerance agenda was supported was by the shaping of the itinerary itself. This was largely the responsibility of the tour leader, who had had enormous experience of travelling and taking tours to these sites. She was responsible to *March of the Living International* for the final itinerary. By particularly featuring a visit in Israel to a community, *Neve Shalom*, where "Arabs and Israelis are struggling to live, work and educate together", she noted:

> *My itinerary was different to the usual Israeli itinerary.*

This visit was controversial with the tour participants and not generally welcomed. In the words of one tour commentator:

> *The South African contingent was very judgemental of this – I tried to say some things – but people were angry.*

This person, in trying to understand their response, observed:

> *People had been immersed in pain for the past week [in Poland] – how could they then step into a place of co-operation and forgiveness?*

And yet, was this not exactly what was anticipated: that such immersion would increase one's humanity and understanding of suffering?

It also needs noting that this angry reaction by participants was played out in Israel, which the tour rhetoric represented as unequivocally positive (and this was repeated by the tour leaders as "hope", "victory", "Life!") The rabbi who accompanied the tour represented Israel as follows:

> *Poland can only prompt questions. Israel can suggest answers.*

The visit to *Neve Shalom,* the Palestinian and Israeli shared community, dramatically changed the story-line. This more problematised view posed some alternatives to these "answers" that Israel was meant to embody. This dissonance was reportedly experienced as aggravating to many participants.[92]

6.7 "Changing the way we remember": victims and victors

The survival of Israel – "its victory" – is linked to the survival of Jews everywhere. This survival and victory have become seen as intrinsically linked to Holocaust memory. As one tour commentator observed, initially Israelis did not want to remember the Holocaust; instead, they cultivated a new spirit of defiance and survival. More recently, with Holocaust memory being embraced, there has been an accompanying shift in the way Jews remember. This commentator noted that there is an emphasis away from mourning, moving to the determination of 'Never Again!' and now towards the celebration of 'We are Here'. This is, she added, represented in ceremonies like the *March of the* Living by bearing the Israeli flag.

This tour commentator sees that this transition from victims to victors, invites interrogation around each representation:

> *Why do we [Jews] see ourselves as victims… and continue this re-imprinting of victimhood?*

And, regarding victors:

> *Israel is not this rosy picture that South African Jews and other Jews in the diaspora like to present… There are thirty-thousand Jews in Israel who are against [what the government is doing to the Palestinians].*

For herself, she said:

> *Israel is not the emblem of my survival or continued survival.*

[92] It is also interesting to note that none of the thirteen interviewees mentioned this visit to the Arab-Israeli community at all in their interviews upon their return.

As another tour commentator said:

> *Israel is a victory – but at what expense?*

The unexplored paradox of this victory was pointed out as:

> *This victory of Israel is not over the Germans – it is over someone else who did not perpetrate any crime against the Jews.*

Or as was also put:

> *Does survival apply to the Palestinians?*

Any such contestation of the grand narrative that the *March of the Living* tour represents were allowed little space during the tour. The fact of the full schedule and subsequent delays meant that there was little time for reflection[93] and the promised de-briefing did not occur, except once.[94] De-briefing is usually seen as a way of processing the strong emotions that seem in some way tied up with learning the lessons of the Holocaust on a tour like this. De-briefing could also have been one opportunity for a focus on tolerance awareness.

6.8 Maybe next time?

It is interesting to note that while the tour commentators who went on the tour agreed that it was very worthwhile, they would do it differently next time. There is the tour leader who

> *[went] for my family who died there, and my father [who was a Holocaust survivor]. I did it for their memory. It was the right thing to do… I have no regrets.*

But she also added:

> *I am not sure I would do it again … Maybe with one bus where I could tell the stories and bring the stories alive…*

This same commentator later remarked:

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[93] See interviews with participants in chapter 5 regarding this – especially 5.4 'The catharsis of discomfort and the politics of disappointment' and 5.15 'Reactions afterwards'.

[94] De-briefing did happen for the South African youth contingent which had an overlapping but separate programme (see Appendix 6).

I would love to assist… [and] be a scholar, not the leader.

For the tour coordinator, she would recommend that everyone go on a tour like this. However, if involved again, she would go for:

> *Quality not quantity. There needs to be smaller numbers – maybe eighty adults and twenty youth – two buses, at the most. [We also could use more time]… it takes about three hours to get anywhere in Poland.*

For the human rights educator, there was the need to specially address tolerance awareness when people got back. For him, this tour was framed as "a journey not to make peace, but to address their ghosts, their family losses". The question of how to make human rights and tolerance education more of a central focus was therefore, in his words, "difficult".

"""""""

7 A GOOD WAY TO MEMORIALISE OR A LESSON IN TOLERANCE?

> *The Holocaust is a moral outrage almost beyond the comprehension of the human mind… To know that so many individuals were pitilessly put to death is one thing, to feel and appreciate the significance of such a tragedy is another. But we must try…*
> (Gregory in Davies 2000:37).

The 2005 *March of the Living* offered the two-hundred-and-fifty South Africans who went, an extraordinary journey. It was a physically and emotionally taxing twelve-day "collective search for meaning" (Ruedenberg-Wright, no date), to try and comprehend and learn the lessons. Themes of meaning and processes of meaning-making have been identified in this research through interviews with eighteen of those participants and a commentator on public memory.

Informed by the public memory literature, and specifically other accounts of Holocaust memory tours, I have looked for patterning such as commonalities and differences between interviewees.

This research addresses a gap in collective memory studies (Kansteiner 2002:197) by focusing primarily on the perspective of participants in these tours – how do the "consumers" or "memory-users"[95] receive and represent their experiences and their meanings? It emphasises the issues of participation in public memory projects, in the light of counter-monument critiques of audiences being "rendered passive" (Young 1992:267).

The meanings highlighted in the interviews occupy at least two discursive spaces that seem at odds with each other. The first was the discourse

[95] Kansteiner's term (2002:181).

around what is a good way to memorialise – particularly when the memory is one of such enormity as the Holocaust. The second is the discourse around tolerance education: how do we 'learn lessons' from the Holocaust? This closing chapter will unpack these two discourses in terms of the research. It will look at how they were constructed, and which meanings were privileged. Out of this discussion, I will identify issues for heritage interpretation and tolerance education.

7.1 A good way to memorialise

For Jews, the imperative to "remember" is a strong part of their religious tradition. One of the tour commentators said that "it's a damn good way" of remembering, where the whole community and the whole history of Jews is brought into consciousness, and where sufficient time is dedicated to the ceremonies involved. Mpho Tsedu (2005), a black South African journalist who accompanied the tour, echoed this. In his article 'A Jewish lesson on remembrance', he writes about how impressed he was that Jews dedicated two weeks to go on such a tour, and how it united Jews through the ceremonies and through the links with Israel. He compared this to South Africa's June 16th day of remembrance, which is largely taken up by focus on the Comrades Marathon.

This 'good way of remembering' in the *March of the Living* notably included processes engaging powerful emotions as well as hopes for personal transformation. This pilgrimage aspect of the tour meant that people willingly chose to go as tourists to places and spaces symbolic of immense human suffering. The journey was described in these terms, both in the written material supplied to them and by the participants. This was what they were going for.

Some people responded most when they visited the actual sites of atrocity:[96] the death camps and the related displays of physical remnants of Holocaust victims – most notably the remaining human ash, and people's shoes. Others were more affected by the "symbolic reflections" of monuments. In both these situations, and in visiting the past sites of a now absent Jewish culture in other parts of Poland, people were invited to 'enter the suffering'. This was largely expressed by participants as "getting a taste of what it must have been like" for the victims. Hearing survivors' stories, and having survivors with them on the tour added to their opportunities to try to understand and empathise with the victims. Further, the very rigorous schedule and discomforts caused by organisational problems were themselves seen by many of those interviewed as another opportunity for empathy and catharsis. The trial of stamina that was required itself became part of the pilgrimage experience, for some. The overall impact was described as traumatising by some participants, while others had a variety of distressing over-reactions or under-reactions upon their return.

This exacting search for meaning by tour participants indicated a longing for deep experiences.

7.2 Holocaust tourism and experiential needs

Some theorists have suggested that there are three experiential needs relevant for museum visitors, which I have addressed as possibly equally pertinent to heritage tourists. These are depicted as reverential, associational and educational (Silverman 1995). However, as heritage and museum tourism, the *March of the Living* experience clearly goes beyond these depictions. Certainly, the re-enactment of the death march from Auschwitz to Birkeneau, the varying acts of commemoration with plaques or the saying of *kaddish*, the bearing witness to the names of the

[96] These sites have undergone changes in terms of boundaries, buildings and entrances, as well as displays and varying levels of interpretive information. See Lennon and Foley's detailed analysis of this in *Dark Tourism* (2000:46-65).

dead, and the many moments of mourning can be interpreted as reflecting the need for reverential experience.

Associational experiential needs that participants indicated as highly important were doing the tour with, or for, family. Associational needs, it could be argued, could also be met through sharing in discussions and de-briefing. Indeed, it appears from the interviews that much was shared by participants emotionally and supportively on the buses and in other settings of the tour. However, formal de-briefing was for the most part only held after people returned to South Africa. Spaces for reflective and intimate social interactions on the tour were limited by the very full schedule that often went late into the evening and started early in the morning.

The associational was also addressed in terms of solidarity – by going with a significantly large group that joined other groups from around the world for this sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the death camps and the end of Nazi rule. The marches on the three main dates of Jewish calendrical significance – *Yom Ha'Shoah, Yom Hazikaron and Yom Ha'atzmaut* – were occasions to enact this unity. They were also occasions to celebrate the survival of the Jews. For some, the march itself was an "act of defiance". The associational needs thus became more keenly needs for identity and desire for a strong Jewish nationhood.

The tour guides, the written materials, talks by experts including survivors, and the seven preparatory lectures addressed educational needs on one level. Learning through emotions by visiting specific sites and taking part in specific ceremonies was clearly part of the approach to make this "International Education Programme"[97] an "unforgettable experience".[98] But participants were reminded continually that the lessons to be learnt were enormous ones. The very *raison d'etre* of

[97] *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).
[98] *March of the Living* promotional flyer (ca. 2005).

Holocaust memorials is so that we will never forget the depths of human capacity for inhumanity, that we will learn the lessons so that these atrocities happen 'Never Again'.

The ongoing question is: How do we learn these lessons? And how did this tour try to tackle this? One way for participants was to try and "make it real".

7.3 Making it real

The hope of many of the *March of the Living* participants to get 'behind' the familiar representations of the Holocaust, to somehow enter memory, to put themselves in victims' shoes, often seemed to be the yearning for an immediacy that continued to elude them. As one participant who had hoped to make "it palpable" said upon her return, she looked forward to seeing the media coverage to make it "more real".

Related to this sense of not 'making it real' is that participants were in a sense on a tour of 're-remembering'. Apart from the three Holocaust survivors who went from South Africa, no-one else in the tour group had direct memories of the Holocaust. For most of those interviewed for this research, there was no direct relation with Poland or with family loss in the Holocaust in Poland itself. Instead, the trip was about some broader sense of family. As one person said: "My family is the three million Jews who were murdered in Poland". Their presence in Poland was to honour the dead of their imaginary community, bear witness to their suffering and the acts of atrocity, and via ceremonies enact and embody the suffering. Kugelmass terms these, "the rites of the tribe". As rites they "inform [participants] how they should experience" (Kugelmass 1992:404). As rites, too, they serve to bind communities together, particularly in the face of times of uncertainty and ambiguousness.[99]

[99] Moore and Myerhoff (1977:24) point out that "since ritual is a good form for conveying a message as if it were unquestionable, it often is used to communicate those very things which are most in doubt … [where] there is conflict, or danger, or political opposition."

In a sense the tourists were not in Poland. They were in "time out of time" travel (Kugelmass 1992:405). This was a tour of commemoration, which did not engage with contemporary issues in Poland, or with Poles very much at all. Kugelmass (1995:281) describes Poland as a stage for visitors on such tours, providing ready-made props. Some people tended to see Poles as antagonistic or anti-Semitic. Polish-Jewish antagonism was addressed in the preparatory talks for the tour, but interviewees did not note occasions during the tour to try and come to grips with this.

7.4 Jewish memory

The sites visited were ones of Jewish memory. This past is represented as an abysmal absence in the face of two-thirds of European Jewry being murdered (Gregory 2000:37), with the lack of either gravestones or immediate family to mourn them. That the focus was for most participants specifically on Jewish memory was a response to this: to bear witness and to honour those who had suffered and died. This was implicit in the written texts given to the tour participants. These addressed a Jewish audience. It was also shaped by the itinerary. The interviewees framed the tour experience in terms of Jewish commemoration and Jewish suffering. Reference to other groups who were persecuted by the Nazis and ended life in the death camps, and to other forms of genocide that affected other groups, was not a unifying theme of the discourses represented.

7.5 "Expanding the threshold of oneself"[100]

While a large part of the education of the tour was through the means of stepping into the shoes of those who suffered in order to develop empathy and identification, it was primarily into Jewish Holocaust victims' shoes. Holocaust survivor Ruth Kluger warns us against "vast generalisation" in our attempts to comprehend the death camps. She

[100] Kugelmass (1995:293).

points out that each survivor's and victim's story was different: "Not everyone was equal behind the barbed wire curtain, and no camp was like any other" (Kluger 2001:77).

Further, as Lincoln (2003:28) points out,[101] "if we [are mainly presented with history] from the point of view of the victim, [we will not be enabled] to understand how crimes against humanity came to be committed". We probably need to be able to at least try the shoes of the bystanders, the collaborators, the resisters, the 'righteous' who hid the persecuted and the persecutors as well, to begin to understand. The tour was not framed to allow opportunities for participants "to expand the threshold of oneself" in this way (Kugelmass 1995:293).

7.6 Rounding off the story in Israel

The participants emerged out of Poland, from these places of the past and of 're-remembered' anguish, to the place of light and hope that Israel represented for them. This brought the pilgrimage to a resolution by strengthening their own identity as Jews, and their commitment to Israel.

While the time in Israel was conveyed as positive and affirming, there was one occasion noted by the tour commentators where there was a fracturing of the un-problematised representation of Israel. This was when they visited a community where Arabs and Israelis were striving to live together. Some of the participants reacted very angrily. Interestingly, this was not reported on in the interviews with the participants themselves.

The only occasion where contestation was mentioned by them was around the discomfort and dissatisfaction with the tour organisation, and the appropriate stance to take in the context of commemoration of the Holocaust victims and the tour participants' bearing witness to their suffering. This discord was also, in a sense, a fracturing – as the right

[101] She is here writing about exhibits of crimes against humanity.

way of behaving in and the right way of organising such a tour was debated. In other ways it seemed rare that the participants saw the tour as constructed and scripted. If they did, it was most often noted favourably in the interviews.

This building of an apparently cohesive narrative through participation on this tour was strengthened by the encouragement to come home with a mission.

7.7 A sense of mission

The intention of the *March of the Living* was also to return with a sense of mission. This was represented in the participants' preparation for the tour and the processes of signing a Pledge. Indeed, before they went, most participants expected that they would have a renewed sense of mission. Yet apart from a couple of people, few had a clear and passionate sense of mission upon their return at the time of being interviewed.

The mission was emblematically expressed as 'Never Again!' and was broadly framed as coming out of 'learning the lessons'. Peter Novick (2001) in his critique of Holocaust memory, *The Holocaust and Collective Memory,* firmly suggests that if we are to move on from the past, learning its lessons, we need to "[confront the past] in all its complexity and contradictions... in all its messiness". The challenge by the counter-monument advocates, by writers on the Holocaust like Novick, and historians like Thelen and Rosenzweig is: how do people become actively engaged in dialogue and debate around a past that is not simple or binary?

7.8 Dialogical?

Jack Kugelmass (1995:281) in his article "Bloody Memories: encountering the past in contemporary Poland", referred to the "scripted non-dialogical nature of Jewish pilgrimages to Poland". Is it impossible to do a tour like

this with an explicit dialogical framing that might enable the contradictions and messiness to be aired? How would this fit with a tour of commemoration, solidarity and identity formation?

If tolerance education is a very focused and personal method of learning about yourself and your attitudes to the Other,[102] and which may need to be confrontational, can this sit alongside acts and attitudes of honouring the dead and attempts to "stare evil in the face"?

This nexus is where the issues lie for heritage interpretation and for tolerance education in this setting. Holocaust memory can tend to be constructed as inextricably tied to the cause of Israel; and Israel for the Jewish people can be seen in terms both of religious prophecy and political struggle, as well as a haven in the face of future persecution.[103] When the story is one of such enormity and human suffering as the Holocaust, interpretation can (perhaps appropriately) assume qualities of the sacred. However, this may mean that any contestation or even representation of multiple voices may seem sacrilegious, seriously compromising the tolerance education agenda.

7.9 The future

> *In frozen memory, the past is nothing but the past. The inner temporality and the politics of Holocaust memory, however, even where they speak of the past, must be the future.*
> – Andreas Huyssen (1994:17).

The issues of how Holocaust memory is constructed or produced all suggest constraints for how participants may actually engage (through their words and actions) in dialogue and debate as part of making

[102] As described by the human rights educator who went on the tour. (See 6.5 'Learning through emotions' above). Elaborating on what he said, tolerance education and awareness raising could be seen as dialogue (if only imaginary) not only with our shadow self but also with the Other.
[103] This is implicit in the text of the package given to participants. See also authors such as Peter Novick (2000 and 2001) and Finkelstein (2000), who raise these issues.

meanings of their memorialisation experience. Ruth Kluger (2001:247), Holocaust survivor and literary scholar, compares art and literature that "[makes] you part of what you see and hear and yet let you stand back and choose", to Holocaust museums and reconstituted concentration camp sites. She finds that "they tell you what you ought to think, as no art or science museum ever does – they impede the critical faculty."

Andreas Huyssen (1994:13), in relation to these constraints, says:

> *If the Holocaust can be compared to an earthquake that has destroyed all instruments for measurement, as Lyotard has suggested, then there surely cannot be only one way of representing it.*

James Young (1998:214), in fact, already sees a shift in post-modern Jewish memory where "many meanings are now being allowed to exist side by side". He sees:

> *Occasional competing meanings for the same historical events… rather than a singular master narrative of memory – that which has traditionally been recited as liturgy.*

Jack Kugelmass (1995:299) as a memory-maker and Jewish studies scholar, affirms the contemporary need to "'write' pasts that speak as eloquently in voices of the other as they do in the voice of the self".

Memory-users, in their courageous search for meaning through visiting the sites of Holocaust atrocity, deserve to be active participants in what they see and hear and feel. They are also worthy of challenging and being challenged by 'competing meanings' and the voices of the Other. For memory-makers and memory-users the exigency, for the sake of the future, is to draw on the lessons from the past, whilst having the courage – in the face of huge anxiety and uncertainty – to withstand closure in the present.

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APPENDICES

1. Statement of commitment to ethical research practice
2. Information sheet
3. Participants' consent agreement form
4. Focus questions 'before'
5. Focus questions 'after'
6. Schedule of memorialisation processes
7. Training programme of participants
8. The pledge of the *March of the Living*
9. South African pledge of the *March of the Living*

Appendix 1

STATEMENT OF COMMITMENT TO ETHICAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

This research has been designed and conducted to comply with ethical research practice. This has been done in order to respect the research participants' views, to protect their confidentiality and to provide accountability and feedback.

All of the people have volunteered to be interviewed. This was based on their hearing a presentation by the researcher and being given a written information sheet outlining the aims of the research, details of the researcher and her contact information, as well as those of the supervisor and the University concerned (see Appendix 2).

Each of those volunteers was, at the time of the interview, further given the same information verbally and another copy of the Information Sheet, and an opportunity to ask any questions about the research. They were requested to sign a Consent Agreement Form (Appendix 3), which allowed that they could end the interview at any stage that they wanted to. Issues of confidentiality and anonymity and interpretation of the consent form were discussed before signing. The agreement was made not to quote any person who was identifiable, unless they had given their consent to being quoted.

The methodology of open-ended focus questions (see Appendices 4 and 5) allowed for a non-invasive, semi-structured discussion format.

In writing up the research report, all interviewees were kept anonymous, except in some instances where their identity was salient to the points being made. In these cases, each individual was contacted and a copy of the quotes with a summary of the context in which they were to be used

forwarded to them. Where requested, changes were made, or quotes not used.

The digital recordings of the interviews, any hand-written notes taken during interviews, and the working sheets used to process the data, plus address lists, will be retained by the researcher in a private facility. This material will not be used for any further research purposes by her or other researchers without the express permission of the interviewees.

Interviewees have been asked if they wanted copies of their digitally recorded interviews. Those who requested same, have been supplied with copies. In addition, those interviewees who have expressed an interest in obtaining copies of the final research report or summary have been notified that they will get same. Participants were also advised that if passed, the report will become a public document available at the University of the Witwatersrand.

Carol Low
January 2006.

Appendix 2

INFORMATION SHEET

MARCH OF THE LIVING – MAY 2005
MASTER'S RESEARCH ON MEMORIALS & HEALING

RESEARCHER: Carol Low BSocSci (UCT) d.o.b 25.12.43

BACKGROUND OF RESEARCHER: Social work for 35 years, most recently working with families who as refugees had experienced torture and trauma or its intergenerational impact. This was in Australia.

Currently doing MA (coursework) in heritage studies at Witwatersrand University, Dr Cynthia Kros supervising.

AIM OF RESEARCH: This research aims to explore what it is that memorials actually do. The focus will be on the personal experiences of the participants' taking part in the commemorative *March of the Living* tour. Their expectations and their experiences will be documented. A particular issue that will be explored is around healing and what it means for participants.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: People will be invited to volunteer to be interviewed before and after the tour. The interview will be a focused conversation, and participants' permission will be asked to tape-record it. Note taking will be offered as a second option to tape-recording.

Any details that will identify participants will be disguised – unless permission is clearly granted to include such details.

REPORT BACK: Each participant will get a copy of their interviews. The final Masters Research Report (if passed) will be publicly available. I will be available to give a group feedback session if people would like to do this.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Carol Low
Email: carollow@mweb.co.za (preferred as I will be away a lot)
Phone: 012 8074961
Cell: 0727 1972 52

Appendix 3

PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT AGREEMENT FORM

MASTERS RESEARCH IN HERITAGE STUDIES
UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND
RESEARCHER: Carol Low

Consent Form

I agree

1. To being interviewed by Carol Low for the research
2. That Carol Low – the researcher – has given me an information sheet about the aims and approach of the research
3. That I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the research and to have them satisfactorily answered
4. That I have been given Carol Low's contact details and the name of her supervisor.

I understand that

1. What I say will be tape-recorded
2. What I say will be treated with confidentiality
3. I may stop the interview at any time for any reason
4. Any direct reference to my words if written up will be given in a context that does not immediately identify me (unless I have given my permission otherwise)
5. I will get a copy of the tape-recording of my interview
6. I will have access to the finished research report once it is accepted for Carol Low's Masters.

Signed: (interviewee)
(researcher)

Names:
Date:

Appendix 4

FOCUS QUESTIONS: 'BEFORE' INTERVIEWS

CUE SHEET: The first round of interviews

1. Info sheet
2. Any questions?
3. Consent form

Six focus areas:

- How they first heard about this particular memorialisation process
- What motivated them to decide to become part of it
- Their expectations of the memorialisation process
- Why the public nature of the experience is important to them
- Their hopes for and fears of the experience
- Does healing have meaning for them in this context?

Age

Family situation

Education

Employment

Appendix 5

FOCUS QUESTIONS: 'AFTER' INTERVIEWS

The follow up interviews were based on 8 focus areas:

- What was their experience?
    - Cues: most memorable, significant and least 'successful' for them
- Were their expectations – including their hopes and fears – met?
    - Cues: themes from first interview
- What were their responses at the time of the visit/process and how did they deal with them?
    - Cues: de-briefing (formal and informal), recording, support
- How did they record their memories?
    - Cue: how was this for them
- How did they feel afterwards?
    - Cues: immediately and at the time of the interview
- Did the public nature of the experience make a difference/work for them?
    - Cues: marches, rituals, services, media focus, solidarity, support
- How would they sum up the experience?
    - in a sentence
- What would they do differently – or would like to have been done differently?
    - Cues: personal, organisational, preparation, sequence.

Appendix 6

SCHEDULE OF MEMORIALISATION PROCESSES

ITINERARIES



POLAND

2 May – Monday
8h00: Meet at the El Al counter at Johannesburg airport and check in luggage directly to Warsaw
11h00: El Al flight to Tel Aviv
21h00: Arrive at Ben Gurion airport
22h00: Depart to hotels

3 May – Tuesday
5h00 Depart hotels to the airport
7h00: EL AL flight from Tel Aviv to Warsaw
10h00: Arrive in Warsaw airport
11h00: Leave airport to Gesia Cemetery - the Jewish Cemetery, Warsaw
13h00: Visit the Umschlagplatz, Mila 18, Memorial Route and the Rappaport Memorial.
14h00: Drive to Lublin – boxed lunch on bus
17h00: Visit Majdanek
20h30: Check in at hotel
21h00: Dinner at Hotel
22h00: Debrief

4 May – Wednesday
6h00: Wake up and check out
6h30: Breakfast
7h00: Depart to Belzec
9h00: Visit Belzec Memorial and Museum
10h30: Drive to Lezajsk
12h30: Visit the cemetery and Rabbi Elimelekh tombstone in Lezajsk
13h30: Depart to Lancut
14h00: Visit the Lancut Synagogue
15h00: A short walk around the park and the palace- Lunch boxes
15h30: Depart to Tarnow
17h30: Visit the Jewish cemetery, the ghetto, the mikvah, the remains of the old synagogue
19h00: Check into Hotel
19h30: Dinner
20h30: The Monument on Plac Wiezniow Oswiecimia – the South African Ceremony for Erev Yom Ha'Shoah (Eve of Holocaust Memorial Day)
22h00: Debrief

5 May – Thursday – Yom Ha'Shoah

5h30: Wake up and check out
6h00: Depart to Auschwitz – Breakfast Box on bus
9h00: Visit Auschwitz I
13h00: The March of the Living
15h00: Official Ceremony at Birkenau
16h00: Visit Birkenau
17h30: South African Ceremony in Birkenau
18h00: Depart to Krakow
20h00: Check in at hotel
20h30: Dinner
21h30: Debrief

6 May – Friday

7h00: Wake up
7h30: Breakfast
8h00: Visit the Rama Synagogue and Cemetery in Kazimierz
9h45: Depart to Oscwiecim
11h15: Visit the Auschwitz Jewish Centre, the town of Oscwiecim and the cemetery
13h15: Depart to Krakow
14h30: Visit Plaszow (with the Richard Stockton College group New Jersey)
15h30: Schindler's factory
16h30: Podgorze ghetto, ghetto wall, pharmacy
18h00: go to hotel to prepare for Shabbat
19h30: Service at the Isaac Synagogue (with the Australian group)
21h00: Dinner
22h00: Debrief

7 May – Saturday

7h30: Wake up
8h00: Breakfast
9h00: Optional prayer at Temple Synagogue (with the Australian group)
11h00: Walking tour of Kazimierz and visit the Galicia Jewish Museum
14h00: Lunch
15h00: Youth – Polish/Jewish meeting
Adults – Polish /Jewish meeting
Meetings with Righteous Gentiles
17h00: Optional walking tour of the Old City (Sukiennice Square) and the Wawel
19h00: Dinner
21h15: Seuda Shlishit and Havdalah
22h00: Final debrief

8 May – Sunday

5h30: Wake up and check out
6h00: Depart to Warsaw - Breakfast box on bus
10h30: Drive to the airport for flight from Warsaw to Tel Aviv.



ISRAEL

ADULT GROUP (Draft 27 April 2005)

8 May – Sunday
13H00: Depart Warsaw to Tel Aviv on El Al flight
19h00: Depart Ben Gurion airport
20h00: Shahecheyanu prayer and Le'chaim near the kottel.
21h00: Check-in at the Hyatt Regency Hotel
21h30: Dinner at hotel.
22h30: Optional evening programme with Christian Friends of Israel representatives, about their Holocaust Survivors project in Jerusalem.

9 May – Monday
6h30: Wake up
7h00: Breakfast at hotel.
8h00: Current Affairs speaker
10h00: Drive to Abu Gosh Monastery – meeting with the Monk Olivier.
12h00: Lunch and shopping at Hare'l Mall.
13h30: Drive to Yad Vashem
14h00: Afternoon at the new Yad Vashem museum. Visit the Avenue of the Righteous Gentiles and Schindler's Tree.
16h15: Shrine of the Book (Heichal Hasefer) – If time permits
18h00: Picnic dinner en rout to Latrun at the Mahal Memorial – Shaa'r Hagay
20h00: Gather at Latrun for the gathering of Holocaust survivors, Partisans and Resistance fighters, members of the IDF, March of the Living delegations and the Prime Minister of Israel Ariel Sharon for a special ceremony.

10 May – Tuesday
6h30: Wake up
7h00: Breakfast at hotel.
8h00: Viewpoint of the Judea Desert with narration from Mount Scopus.
9h00: Drive to Masada.
10h30: Go up Masada with the cable car.
12h30: Lunch at Masada Guest House.
13h30: Afternoon spa at Mineral Beach – the Dead Sea.
15h30: Drive back to the hotel for rest and preparation for the start of Yom Hazikaron.
18h00: Drive to Kochav Ya'ir
20h00: Join the Yom Hazikaron ceremony at Kochav Ya'ir.
21h30: Meeting with bereaved families in Kochav Ya'ir.

11 May – Wednesday
6h30: Wake up

7h00: Breakfast at hotel.
8h30: Tree planting
9h45: Visit Kibbutz Neveh Shalom for a tour and discussion
11h00: Mini Israel - Yom Hazikaron siren
13h00: Lunch at Rabin Guest House.
14h00: Afternoon presentation about Rabin and discussion about Israel now. Discussion with General David Tsur.
16h00: Visit the battle site of Ammunition Hill – if time permits
17h30: Return to hotel for a talk with a settler about their viewpoint of the current situation in Israel
19h00: Dinner and prepare for Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations
20h00: Party for Yom Ha'atzmaut at the Maccabim community (families are welcome)

12 May- Thursday
7h00: Wake up
7h30: Breakfast at hotel.
8h30: Har Herzl Military cemetery
11h00: Farewell session at Rabin Guest House with a special Lunch
13h00: gather for the Yom Ha'atzmaut March.
14h00: The March starts at Safra Square (City Hall building) and ends at Davidson Centre (marching through the walls of the Old City, entering through Zion Gate). Ceremony at the Kottel.
16h00: A walk through the Jewish Quarter and time for shopping there.
17h00: Proceed to Brechat Ha'sultan and pass via Schindler's Grave at Mount Zion
18h00: Special March of the Living Dinner, a ceremony and a party.
22h30: Overnight at hotel

13 May – Friday
3h30: Wake up and check out – coffee and cake
4h30: Drive to airport
5h00: Check in to our flight back to Johannesburg at 07h10.

YOUTH GROUP (draft 27 April 2005)

8 May - Sunday
13H00: Depart Warsaw to Tel Aviv on El Al flight
19h00: Depart Ben Gurion airport
20h00: Dinner at the Tel Aviv Guest House
21h00: Drive to the North of Israel
22h00: Night visit of the caves of Rosh Hanikrah - Shahecheyanu prayer and Le'chaim
23h30: Check in at Shlomi Guest House

9 May – Monday
7h00: Wake up and pack a backpack for 2 days. Suitcases to stay at Shlomi Guest House
8h00: Breakfast
8h30: Outdoor Activities - adventures in nature
9h30: Hiking in Amud river, Ein Tine
13h00: Pizza Lunch
14h00: Continue with Outdoor Activities – adventures in nature – Mt. Meiron
19h30: Kumzitz

22h00: sleeping at the footsteps of Mount Meiron

10 May – Tuesday
7h00: Wake up
7h30: Breakfast
9h00: Nabi Yosha Fortress and Palmach trail
11h00: Rosh Pina – tour and shopping
13h00: Lunch at shopping center
16h00: Drive to Shlomi Guest House to prepare for Yom Hazikaron
18h45: Drive to Kfar Vradim for Yom Hazikaron Ceremony
20h00: Yom Hazikaron ceremony and meetings with bereaved families
22h30: Shlomi Guest House

11 May – Wednesday – Yom Hazikaron
7h00: Wake up and check out
7h30: Breakfast
8h00: Drive to Ghetto Fighters Kibbutz
9h00: Special Programme at Ghetto Fighters House (siren at 11h00)
11h30: Drive to Usfia Alkarmel
12h30: Special Druze lunch and a talk about the Druze
14h30: Druze market for shopping
16h30: Drive to Jerusalem
18h30: Check in at Ma'ale Hahamisha Guest House and dinner
19h30: Drive to Maccabim for Yom Ha'atzmaut celebrations (open evening for families)

12 May – Thursday – Yom Ha'atzmaut
7h00: Wake up
7h30: Breakfast and free time at the pool of Ma'ale Hahamisha Kibbutz (open time with families)
10h00: Visit Yad Hashmona
11h45: Kastel Mount– Independence Day story
12h00: Final debrief and lunch
13h30: gather for the Yom Ha'atzmaut March.
14h00: The March starts at Safra Square (City Hall building) and ends at Davidson Centre (marching through the walls of the Old City, entering through Zion Gate). Ceremony at the Kottel.
16h00: Visit the Kottel; A walk through the Jewish Quarter and time for shopping there.
18h00: Proceed to Brechat Ha'sultan for a special March Dinner and a ceremony and party after that.
22h30: Overnight at Ma'ale Hahamisha

13 May – Friday
3h30: Wake up and check out – Coffee and cake
4h30: Drive to airport
5h00: Check in to our flight back to Johannesburg at 07h10.

Appendix 7

TRAINING PROGRAMME OF PARTICIPANTS

March of the Living – Educational sessions
ADULT GROUP

Session 1 – Tuesday 15 March
Time: 19h00 – 22h00

- Introduction of members of the group to each other. Facilitated talk about expectations from the March, why do we want to go to Poland and Israel and what do we bring to the group, our fears, worries, questions etc. The grieving process – the emotional side of the journey to Poland – **Tali Nates**
- The geography and landscape of Poland – Where are we going? Places we will visit: itinerary, maps and visuals – **Tali Nates**
- Polish-Jewish relations – Polish-Jewish relations during World War II; Poland and Polish people today; Dialogue between Jews and Poles – **Ronnie Mink**

Session 2 – Tuesday 22 March
Time: 19h00 – 22h00

- What can we learn from the Holocaust? - video "Confessions of a Hitler Youth" and a discussion – **Tali Nates**
- Jewish life in pre-war Poland: What was lost during the Shoah? Diversity of Jewish life – cities, shtetls, religious and secular; rich and poor; Polish speaking and Yiddish speaking; diverse political affiliation etc. The talk will include a video "The Jews of Poland: Five cities" (1938-1939, Warsaw and Krakow) – **Ronnie Mink**
- The years of persecution: the kingdom of Night – part 1. The talk would include Hitler's rise to power, 1933-1939 – years of persecution in Germany; Video "Outcast" – **Tali Nates**

Session 3 – Tuesday 29 March
Time: 19h00 – 22h00

- The years of persecution – part 2. The talk would include the start of the war, the establishment of the ghettos, and the leadership in the different ghettos. – **Tali Nates**
- Survivor testimony: **Irene Klass** – Warsaw ghetto
- The years of persecution – part 3. The talk would include the camps, the Final Solution, the reaction of the world, the Righteous – **Ronnie Mink**

Session 4 – Tuesday 5 April
Time: 19h00 – 22h00

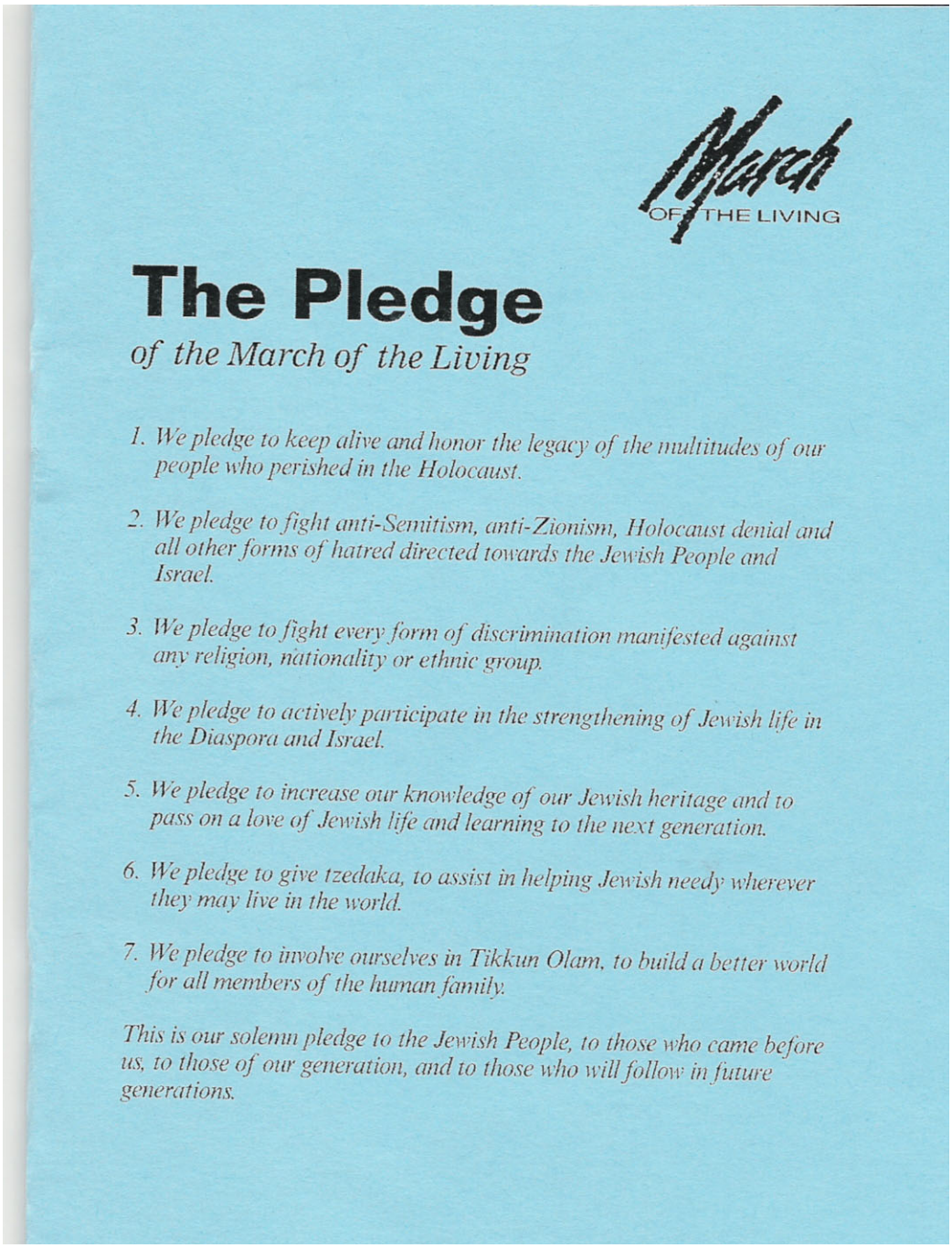
- What did the camps look like then? What do they look like now? Auschwitz I, Auschwitz-Birkenau, Majdanek and Belzec – **Tali Nates**
- Survivor testimony: **Don Krausz** – the camps and the death march and March of the Living.
- Resistance: spiritual and physical – **Ronnie Mink**

Session 5 – Tuesday 12 April
Time: 19h00 – 22h00

- Why we return? How do we remember the Holocaust? The talk would include topics like the power of memory, the duty to remember, the purpose of memory, the meaning of the ceremonies in sites of Jewish martyrdom – **Ronnie Mink and Tali Nates**
- Jewish identity: obligation or choice burden or privilege? Include topics such as why be Jewish? The impacts of the Holocaust on Jewish identity, the Jewish view of God in post Holocaust world, the effect of the State of Israel on Jewish identity – **Rabbi Ra'anan**
- Israel – itinerary – **Tali Nates**
- Current issues in Israel – **Joseph Gerassi**
- Final questions and farewell – **Tali Nates and Eli Romano**

Appendix 8

THE PLEDGE OF THE *MARCH OF THE LIVING*



March OF THE LIVING

The Pledge

of the March of the Living

1. *We pledge to keep alive and honor the legacy of the multitudes of our people who perished in the Holocaust.*

2. *We pledge to fight anti-Semitism, anti-Zionism, Holocaust denial and all other forms of hatred directed towards the Jewish People and Israel.*

3. *We pledge to fight every form of discrimination manifested against any religion, nationality or ethnic group.*

4. *We pledge to actively participate in the strengthening of Jewish life in the Diaspora and Israel.*

5. *We pledge to increase our knowledge of our Jewish heritage and to pass on a love of Jewish life and learning to the next generation.*

6. *We pledge to give tzedaka, to assist in helping Jewish needy wherever they may live in the world.*

7. *We pledge to involve ourselves in Tikkun Olam, to build a better world for all members of the human family.*

This is our solemn pledge to the Jewish People, to those who came before us, to those of our generation, and to those who will follow in future generations.

Appendix 9

THE SOUTH AFRICAN PLEDGE OF THE *MARCH OF THE LIVING*

A SOUTH AFRICAN DELEGATION PLEDGE
MARCH OF THE LIVING 2005

As a participant in the 2005 March of the Living, I will embark on a journey into the past, present and future of the Jewish People and of humanity as a whole. Together, we will encounter the remnants of the tragic Jewish past in Poland and experience the hope of the future when we visit Israel. I will become a witness of the choices of the perpetrators, the bystanders, the collaborators, the rescuers and the victims of men's inhumanity to his fellow men.

I will witness the remains of the once vibrant Jewish communities in Poland and the death camps that destroyed them, and promise that we, as individuals and as people, accept the responsibility of remembrance. However, remembrance alone is not enough. We must remember, educate, act and prevent. That is why we are here.

As the last generation to come in contact with actual survivors, it is our responsibility to carry on their legacy to future generations as well as to spread their message to the present one.

In assuring that our presence in the world will never dim, we declare the following:

Upon my return…

- *I pledge to honour and keep alive the legacy of the multitudes of people who perished in the Holocaust.*
- *I pledge to fight anti-Semitism, Holocaust denial and all other forms of hatred directed towards the Jewish people and Israel.*
- *I pledge to fight every form of discrimination manifested against any religion, nationality or ethnic group.*
- *As a South African, I pledge to fight against genocide, mass murder and torture in my continent.*

After the Holocaust the international community decided that it is the responsibility of the world to prevent and stop genocide. However, we failed!!! Genocides have happened again and again in the 20th century. And now, genocide is again taking place on our African continent. As we live our lives, eat, drink, talk and smile, thousands of people are being murdered, expelled, tortured, raped and humiliated in Darfur, Western Sudan.

Only after we understand and fulfil the above goals, will we fulfil the obligation to ensure that another Holocaust will never happen again.

_____ _____

Date *Signature*