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SEATTLE U COMMUNITY HONORS HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

**JACQUELINE
LEWIS**[Jacqueline Lewis](#)Jan 31st, 2018 [0 Comments](#)

“It is not just the Holocaust. There is injustice happening now all over the world,” said Reverend Victoria Carr- Ware, the Ecumenical and Multifaith Campus Minister. “It’s important to be reminded of our history, so it does not happen again.”

Jan. 27 marked National Holocaust Remembrance Day as recognized by the European Union in 2005, and in honor of this day, Campus Ministry coordinated a presentation from Holocaust survivor, Agi Day, following a discussion on the evening of Jan. 23.

First-year Talia Rossi accompanied a friend to the event. “I think it’s really interesting to hear from survivors and people who experienced [the Holocaust] first-hand because genocide is so often not talked about,” Rossi said.

“Genocide is not something that did happen once,” student and attendee Jessica Piranni said. “In our American education system we don’t talk about the others, which is problematic.”

For student Jessica Piranni, the Holocaust Remembrance event was as way for her to deepen her understanding on something she is interested in. Piranni recently returned from study abroad in Vienna and Zurich, where she spent a lot of her time with the Jewish community in Vienna.

“We visited a synagogue, we went to a concentration camp and we talked a lot about the continual prosecution of the Jewish people. I take any opportunity to learn more,” Piranni said. “We don’t have a lot of time to hear from the source [of Holocaust survivors]. As students we should do as much as we can to learn.”

For Jewish and other non-Catholic student groups on campus, Campus Ministry provides funding for programming to be in worship. Students can get connected with resources, either on-campus or off-campus, to help navigate the changing spiritual dilemmas that take root while in college.



Holocaust Survivor, Agi Day told her story at the Holocaust Remembrance Day event on Jan 23

"It is important to realize there are people who understand the sacred differently. By providing opportunities for exploration and reflection, it allows our students to feel connected and welcomed here, to explore culture and religion and be in relation with one another," Rev. Victoria said.

Each year Campus Ministry offers welcome events during the beginning of fall quarter for Jewish students, and has brought rabbis to campus for engagement with students for Jewish holidays.

"Even though we are a Catholic institution, we want everyone to feel welcomed and valued here on campus," Rev. Victoria said.

With this mission in mind, Campus Ministry created a space for engagement, reflection and prayer to honor a time of great pain for the Jewish people.

Agi Day, a resident of Seattle, is a Holocaust survivor who speaks at schools in the area and was the main speaker for the on-campus event on Tuesday. Day was just an infant when her family faced persecution. She talked about her dislocation and fear during the war, especially as a small child.

"Children of war are different. We did what we were told, when we were told, because we knew that our lives or the lives of our family were at stake," Day said, explaining how she quietly listened to her mother and caretakers while in hiding.

Born in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, to Hungarian and Serbian parents in May 1940, she traveled Europe in hiding during World War II. She joined her mother in Toronto, Ontario at age 11 and continued school. She became a teacher, working in Montreal until moving with her family to Seattle.

“Today, it is important today to come and listen to people who are survivors because at one point in time there will be no survivors to advocate for what actually happened,” freshman Michael Behr said after the event. “When you’re learning about things as terrible as genocide, you kind of lose sight of how real it was to [people] and how it affected their lives completely.”

Day is a member of the Holocaust Center for Humanity’s Speakers Bureau. The Holocaust Center partnered with Campus Ministry to put on the event. The Center is a museum open in downtown Seattle on Wednesdays and Sundays.

The event continued with a discussion on conformity, led by Rev. Victoria of Campus Ministry, with resources from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum. Attendees broke into small discussion groups to analyze the dangers and preventions to conformity.

Finishing with a memorial and prayer led by Rabbi Kate Speizer of Temple De Hirsch Sinai, guests were asked to take as much time reflecting as the names of the Nazi concentration camps were read over seven burning candles, the candles representing the millions of lives lost during the Holocaust.

**Jacqueline may be reached at
jlewis@su-spectator.com**



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