

# USC Shoah Foundation

*Center for Advanced Genocide Research*

## **USC PRESIDENT C. L. MAX NIKIAS ANNOUNCES CENTER FOR ADVANCED GENOCIDE RESEARCH WITH USC SHOAH FOUNDATION FOUNDER STEVEN SPIELBERG**

LOS ANGELES, CA - April 25, 2014 - Seeking to build on USC Shoah Foundation's 20 years of success in gathering testimonies of Holocaust and genocide survivors, the University of Southern California will establish the Center for Advanced Genocide Research to study how and why such instances of mass violence occur, and how to intervene in the cycle that can lead to them.

USC President C. L. Max Nikias and USC Shoah Foundation founder Steven Spielberg announce the new research center, which will be housed within the USC Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences. The Center will serve as the research and scholarship unit of the USC Shoah Foundation, building off the substantial academic work the Institute has accomplished since joining USC in 2006. It will also integrate the Resisting the Path to Genocide research cluster that has been part of the successful interdisciplinary Dornsife 2020 initiative for the past four years, and has opened new avenues of research on mass violence.

The center aligns with the university's strategic vision of creating scholarship with consequences by bringing together experts from different fields to tackle grand challenges facing the world today.

"We are honored to establish this vital center of scholarship and learning," Nikias said. "The University of Southern California is and will always remain committed to creating a world freed from genocide. Through the Center for Advanced Genocide Research, we resolve to have a global impact on the real-world problem of genocide."

"The USC Shoah Foundation has made tremendous progress during its first 20 years, but its work is far from finished," Spielberg said. "The Institute has collected and

indexed nearly 52,000 testimonies and established educational programs, such as IWitness and Teaching With Testimony that bring people who experienced history into classrooms around the world. Now comes the next significant chapter, one that establishes the Institute as one of the leading academic centers of excellence for the study of the Holocaust and genocides. The potential is there for groundbreaking research.”

The Center for Advanced Genocide Research will distinguish itself by focusing on interdisciplinary study organized around three themes to advance the analysis of genocide and systematic mass violence on an international scale.

- **Resistance to Genocide and Mass Violence** will focus on acts of resistance and elements of defiance that slow down or stop genocidal processes.
- **Violence, Emotion and Behavioral Change** will study the nature of genocide and mass violence and how they impact emotional, social, psychological, historical and physical behavior.
- **Digital Genocide Studies** examines how big data and large datasets, including the 52,000 testimonies in the USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive, can be used to find patterns in the field of mass violence and its resistance.

“By combining ongoing research with the vast amounts of information already collected by the USC Shoah Foundation, I believe we will be able to decode the conditions that can lead to genocide,” said Steve Kay, dean of USC Dornsife College. “And by funneling what we learn through our Digital Humanities Program, we will be able to teach tomorrow’s leaders new ways of stemming the tide of violence and intolerance.”

The Center will uniquely position USC as being the only world-renowned private research institution with substantial original material from the Holocaust and other genocides.

The USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archive contains nearly 52,000 testimonies with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides, including the Rwandan Tutsi Genocide and the Nanjing Massacre. Testimonies from survivors of the Armenian and Cambodian genocides will be integrated in 2015.

The Special collections of USC Doheny Library houses private papers of German and

Austrian emigrants who fled the Nazis, among them the famous German-Jewish writer Lion Feuchtwanger.

The Holocaust and Genocide Studies collection at the USC Doheny Library contains more than 1,000 original Nazi books and pamphlets, Jewish publications, as well as microfilms with original documents such as Nazi newspapers. This collection also contains books on almost every facet of the Holocaust and on various genocides, with a total collection of relevant works reaching 12,000 volumes.

“We need to better understand the causes and consequences of violent and genocidal societies,” USC Shoah Foundation Executive Director Stephen D. Smith said. “By building on the robust genocide research opportunities already in place at USC, we will be in a position to have a real impact in the field.”

Wolf Gruner, Shapell-Guerin Chair in Jewish Studies and professor of history at USC, will serve as the director of the Center for Advanced Genocide Research.

“With its fellowship program, future conferences and chairs, the new research center will create an intellectual hub for international and interdisciplinary scholarship on the topic of Holocaust and genocide studies,” Gruner said. “Los Angeles is home to the largest survivor communities of several genocides – including the Cambodian and Armenian genocides. They will act as a constant reminder of the importance of our task.”

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