

Julia Lentini, Sinti and Roma Survivor Deprivation and Pseverserance

The following glossary has been created to assist students and teachers with potentially unfamiliar words, phrases, or concepts in Julia's testimony.

Auschwitz II-Birkenau¹ In October 1941, 10,000 Soviet POWs began the construction of Auschwitz II-Birkenau. When construction was complete, the camp had nine sections separated by electrified barbed-wire fences. Originally intended as a camp for 100,000 Soviet POWs, Auschwitz II-Birkenau's main function became the murder of European Jews. The insecticide Zyklon B was used in the camp's gas chambers. Four large gas chamber and crematoria facilities became operational between March and June 1943. When all four were operational, Auschwitz II-Birkenau possessed an unsurpassed capacity for mass murder and body disposal. Gassing operations continued until November 1944. On January 27, 1945, the Auschwitz camp complex was liberated by Soviet forces; at Auschwitz II-Birkenau 5,800 prisoners remained alive. During the course of its existence, prisoners in the camp represented many categories, including political prisoners, Poles, criminals, Jews, Soviet POWs, and Sinti and Roma ("Gypsies"). It is estimated that 1.1 million to 1.6 million predominantly Jewish men, women, and children were murdered at Auschwitz, nearly all of them in the gas chambers at Auschwitz II-Birkenau.

Bund Deutscher Mädel¹ The League of German Girls (BDM) was organized in a similar fashion to the Hitler Youth. There were two general age groups within the BDM: young girls 10 to 14 years of age and older girls 15 to 21 years. The central focus of this group was to remind young girls that they were the "carriers of the National Socialist worldview." Toward that end, they were expected to dedicate themselves to service and physical fitness aimed at preparing them for motherhood.

Bürgermeister³ The literal English translation is master of the town [mayor].

Hitler Youth¹ The Nazis established the Hitler Youth (*Hitler Jugend* or HJ) organization in 1926 to teach German boys the beliefs of the Nazi Party and to transform them into a "violently active, dominating, brutal youth." Once they had been indoctrinated, Hitler Youth were highly disciplined and fanatically loyal to Hitler. During the years of the Third Reich, the Hitler Youth became Germany's principal youth organization, and in 1936 it was made a state agency. German boys 14 to 18 years old were expected to enlist. Membership in the Hitler Youth became compulsory after 1939.

Magazine³ a storehouse; warehouse.

SS² The German abbreviation for *Schutzstaffel*, which literally translates to protection squads. It was a paramilitary formation of the Nazi Party initially created to serve as bodyguards to Hitler and other Nazi leaders. It later took charge of political intelligence-gathering, the German police and the central security apparatus, the concentration camps, and the systematic mass murder of Jews and other victims.

Shoah⁴ A Hebrew word meaning "catastrophe," referring to the Holocaust.

Sinti and Roma (Gypsy)¹ The collective term *Gypsy* (supposedly derived from *Egyptian*) pejoratively refers to members of distinctive Sinti and Roma tribes. Members of these groups refer to themselves as "Rom," which means

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“man” or “husband.” Allegedly originating from northern India, waves of Gypsies migrated to Western Europe by the fifteenth century. In Europe most Gypsies belong to either Sinti (in Germany and Western Europe) or Roma (in Austria, Eastern Europe, and the Balkans) tribes and speak an Indo-European language called Romani. Persecution of Sinti and Roma, which existed for centuries in Europe, was based on differences in language and appearance and on their nomadic lifestyle. Granted full equality under the Weimar Constitution, German Gypsies continued to be targeted by both new and existing discriminatory legislation. Such targeting continued on an expanded, and often “racial” basis throughout the Nazi period. Gypsies were classified as asocial and work-shy, and were targeted for discrimination along with the Jews under the Nuremberg Laws.

Tattooing² During the Holocaust, concentration camp prisoners received tattoos only at one location, the Auschwitz concentration camp complex, which consisted of Auschwitz I (Main Camp), Auschwitz II (Auschwitz-Birkenau), and Auschwitz III (Monowitz and the subcamps). Incoming prisoners were assigned a camp serial number, which was sewn to their prison uniforms. Only those prisoners selected for work were issued serial numbers; those prisoners sent directly to the gas chambers were not registered and received no tattoos. Beginning in February 1943, SS authorities issued two separate series of number to Roma (Gypsy) prisoners registered at Auschwitz: one for the men and one for the women. Through August 1944, 10,094 numbers were assigned from the former series and 10,888 from the latter. Gypsy prisoners were given the letter Z (*Zigeuner* is German for Gypsy) in addition to the serial number.

Typhoid fever¹ An acute infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Salmonella typhi*. The bacterium usually enters the mouth by ingestion of contaminated water or food.

Source of Definitions

¹USC Shoah Foundation’s Visual History Archives Search Terms and Definitions

²The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum online glossary and/or *Holocaust Encyclopedia*

³ www.dictionary.com

⁴ *Echoes and Reflections: a Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust*