

Collections

USC Shoah Foundation

The Institute for Visual History and Education

USC Shoah Foundation is committed to working with partners around the world to expand its collection of testimonies from survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust, to include other genocides and crimes against humanity, and to make those testimonies available for educational use via the Visual History Archive.

Developing Voice Through Testimony

The Institute's Visual History Archive currently contains video testimonies from the Holocaust, 1915 Armenian Genocide, 1937 Nanjing Massacre in China, the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the Guatemalan Genocide of the early 1980s and testimonies from the Cambodian Genocide of the late 1970s.

European Holocaust, 1939-1945

The largest audiovisual collection of its kind in the world, the Holocaust Collection is composed of over 53,000 testimonies of Jewish survivors, political prisoners, Sinti and Roma (Gypsy) survivors, Jehovah's Witness survivors, survivors of eugenics policies and homosexual survivors, as well as rescuers and aid providers, liberators, and participants in war crimes trials.

The Institute recorded the vast majority of its Holocaust testimonies during its formative years in the 1990s. But it continues to add testimonies via programs such as "Preserving the Legacy," "Testimonies of North Africa and the Middle East" and "New Dimensions in Testimony."

Preserving the Legacy

Preserving the Legacy is an initiative where organizations partner with USC Shoah Foundation to have their testimony collections digitized, indexed, and integrated

into the Visual History Archive to make them more accessible to scholars, students, educators and the general public, and to ensure they are preserved in perpetuity. Some of the testimonies will also be incorporated into IWitness, the Institute's award-winning online education platform designed for students in grades 6-12. Efforts are underway to collect as many as 3,000 new life stories in this fashion. To date, Preserving the Legacy includes testimonies belonging to Jewish Family and Children's Services of the San Francisco Bay Area, Holocaust Museum Houston, Florida Holocaust Museum, the Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre and Chaim Neuberger Holocaust Education Center in Toronto, as well as other collections from institutions in Canada and United States. Partner organizations retain ownership of their testimonies, receive digital copies to make them accessible at their locations, in addition to getting full access to the Visual History Archive.

New Dimensions in TestimonySM

USC Shoah Foundation has also partnered with concept developer Conscience Display to conceive and design a cutting-edge technology called New Dimensions in Testimony, which captures three-dimensional interviews of survivors so that in the future, when there are no longer living survivors, people will still be able to engage with them conversationally.

A handful of Holocaust survivors who have already sat before a camera to share their life stories now stored in the Visual History Archive are giving their testimony again. This time, however, they sit before about 100 cameras arranged in a rig to capture a three-dimensional recording of their telling their stories in a new way: by answer-



Survivors from five of the Visual History Archive's six collections posed in Los Angeles in April 2015. Clockwise from top left: Dario Gabbai (Holocaust), Sara Pol-Lim (Cambodian Genocide), Aracely Garrido (Guatemalan Genocide), Yevnige Salibian (Armenian Genocide), and Edith Umugiraneza (Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda).

ing questions that people are most likely to ask. The Institute has completed one testimony using this groundbreaking approach that was piloted with the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Education Center and is in the process of finalizing 13 more.

Funding for New Dimensions in Testimony was provided in part by Pears Foundation; The Louis Franklin Smith Foundation; and Melinda Goldrich & Andrea Clayton The Goldrich Family Foundation, in honor of Jona Goldrich.

Testimonies from the Middle East and North Africa

The Institute is in the midst of a campaign to record at least 35 testimonies from the Middle East and North Africa, where the Nazi regime gained strong influence during World War II. Although USC Shoah Foundation interviewed Holocaust survivors of Sephardic heritage, these testimonies are mainly histories and experiences from Central and Eastern Europe. The North Africa and Middle East project is establishing a collection of testimonies from survivors and eyewitnesses who lived through the events of

over 70 years ago, and the destruction unleashed there by Nazi occupiers or governments that were Nazi sympathizers. These experiences are crucial for understanding the global impact and scale of Nazi ideology and its policies.

Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, 1994

Featuring testimonies collected by USC Shoah Foundation and the Kigali Genocide Memorial, the Rwandan Testimony Collection includes 86 eyewitness accounts of the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsis that claimed as many as one million lives over the course of approximately 100 days. The testimonies in this collection mark the beginning of the Rwanda Archive and Education Program, the Institute's landmark initiative in partnership with Aegis Trust at the Kigali Genocide Memorial (KGM) that aspires to record and preserve Rwandan testimonies as an educational resource for the entire world, for all time.

Armenian Genocide, 1915-1923

With over 330 interviews conducted by genocide survivor and documentary filmmaker Dr. J. Michael Hagopian, the Armenian Genocide Collection was presented to the Institute by the Armenian Film Foundation in 2014 and explores the World War I-era massacres and deportations in the Ottoman Empire that claimed the lives of an estimated 1.5 million Armenians. The interviews were conducted from 1982 through 2004, with survivors who were between the ages of eight to 29 at the time of the genocide. The interviews were done by Hagopian as part of the 70 educational and documentary films the filmmaker wrote, directed or produced during his lifetime. They represent the largest collection of filmed interviews of the first genocide of the twentieth century.

Nanjing Massacre, 1937

In conjunction with Nanjing Massacre Memorial Hall, and with funding provided by the Siezen Foundation, the Institute has begun collecting testimonies from survivors and witnesses of the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, which claimed the lives of up to 300,000 Chinese civilians and disarmed soldiers over the course of two months at the hands of invading Japanese forces. To date, the Visual History Archive features 30 testimonies concerning the Nanjing Massacre and is in the process of adding an additional 72.

“This comprehensive collection of testimonies spans the better part of a century and delves into mass atrocities that occurred on four continents, reminding us that genocide is unbounded by matters of time and place. Each collection adds context for the others, providing multiple pathways to learn from the eyewitnesses of history across time, locations, cultures, and socio-political circumstances.”

*Karen Jungblut, director of collections,
USC Shoah Foundation*

Cambodian Genocide, 1975-1979

Developed through a partnership between USC Shoah Foundation and the Documentation Center of Cambodia, the Cambodian Genocide Collection offers testimonies of Khmer Rouge period survivors who escaped the killings of nearly two million Cambodians.

Guatemalan Genocide, 1981-1983

Working with the La Fundación de Antropología Forense de Guatemala

(FAFG), a Guatemalan forensics organization, USC Shoah Foundation has launched a project to collect video testimonies of witnesses to the Guatemalan Genocide of the early 1980s. In all, about 200,000 people died in the decades-long civil war that ended in 1996.

About 300 video interviews from Guatemalan survivors and witnesses have been collected in Guatemala for the pilot program. All testimonies were conducted in Spanish or K'iche', the testimonies are being preserved and indexed by USC Shoah Foundation, and the first 10 were integrated into the Visual History Archive in August 2016.