

**USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides a compelling voice for education and action.**

### Leading Change Through Testimony

As keeper of the world's largest archive of audiovisual testimonies of survivors and witnesses to genocide, USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education puts storytelling at the heart of its mission to use its ever-growing mass of interviews for education, research and action.

No other organization has the same combination of vision and intellectual, digital and physical assets to inspire people to take the future into their own hands so the terrors of the past are not repeated.

The Institute's efforts are rooted in the Visual History Archive®, a massive repository containing 55,000 testimonies of survivors and witnesses to genocide and crimes against humanity. The bulk of the interviewees lived through the Holocaust, but the Archive also includes hundreds of eyewitness accounts from people who survived the 1915 Armenian Genocide, the 1937 Nanjing Massacre, the Guatemalan Genocide of the early 1980s, the 1994 Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda and the Cambodian Genocide of the late 1970s.

The Institute also has branched into the realm of alternate reality, inventing an interactive project called New Dimensions in Testimony<sup>SM</sup>. Using groundbreaking natural language software, Holocaust survivor testimonies have been powered by complex algorithms to respond in real time to questions asked by viewers that will enable audiences far into the future to be able to ask any ques-

tion to the survivor about their life experience.

The testimonies were conducted in 62 countries and 41 languages, and average a little more than two hours each in length. In the vast majority the interviewees share their complete personal history of life before, during and after their experience with genocide.

The Visual History Archive contains more than 115,000 hours of testimony – the equivalent of a dozen years. And yet, using a search engine developed and patented by the Institute, students and researchers can pinpoint moments of interest down to the minute. This indexing capability makes use of over 64,000 keywords and phrases, 1.8 million names and over 718,000 images.

Ultimately, the Visual History Archive forever preserves the faces and voices of the people who witnessed history, allowing their firsthand stories to enlighten and inspire action against intolerance for generations to come.

Leveraging the world-class faculty and scholarly resources of its home at the University of Southern California, within the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and with the vital support of the philanthropic community, the Institute strives to understand and share the insights contained within the Visual History Archive through four strategic pillars: Research, Education, Access and Global Outreach.

### Pillar: Research

The Institute is fast becoming the academic authority for the study of genocide and the role of audiovisual testimony in research. Spearheading this work is the Institute's Center for Advanced Genocide Research, which launched in 2014.

At the core of the Center's mission is to investigate the origins of genocide and the conditions that enable people to resist mass



violence.

Led by Wolf Gruner, USC Professor of History and the Shapell-Guerin Chair in Jewish Studies, the Center grapples with the most pressing and important questions on the topic of genocide: Why do some people choose to resist mass violence targeting entire populations when others stand by or collaborate? How do violence and its emotional impact change individual behavior? How can digital humanities facilitate and enhance scholarly work?

Addressing these and other questions is vitally important to broadening our understanding of the origin and the developments of genocide and identifying possible interventions.

The Center has established a research fellowship program, which recruits top genocide scholars from universities around the world to use the Archive and other primary-source materials at USC for the benefit of their research and the field at large.

The Center also organizes annual international workshops and conferences on various topics that fall under the central theme of "Resistance to Genocide."

Additionally, the Center supervises USC Shoah Foundation's student organization, DEFY, whose undergraduate members put together on-campus events including documentary screenings, seminars and talks with survivors.

## Pillar: Education

Central to the mission of collecting testimonies is the commitment to using them for education, thus inspiring younger generations to become active, informed and thoughtful participants in civil society.

The main gateway to the Institute's educational content is IWitness, a website that brings the human stories of the Visual History Archive to secondary school teachers and their students in the form of dynamic multimedia learning activities.

The free site has been used by students and educators in all 50 states and over 80 countries including Poland, Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, Australia and France.

IWitness features an array of engaging multimedia activities and resources. Built around a continually growing list of more than 2,200 full length testimonies and over 500 short, curated clips of testimony from the Institute's Visual History Archive, IWitness complements curriculum across subjects including history, social studies, English language arts, foreign language, government and character education.

IWitness lessons range from 20-minute skill-building mini-lessons to project-based lessons that lead to video projects that challenge students to research and produce PSAs, video essays, or short films using the built-in video editor.

The ultimate goal of IWitness is to motivate students to act responsibly and ultimately to help them uphold important values. These include justice, equality, diversity, tolerance and how best to counter attitudes and acts of hatred.

The Institute's other education programs include:

- Teaching with Testimony – A two-year professional development program to help educators use testimony and digital learning tools appropriately and effectively.
- ITeach – A one-day professional development seminar that includes an introduction to the Institute's educational programs.

- Echoes and Reflections – A Holocaust-focused multimedia professional development program providing secondary teachers in the United States with accurate and authentic Holocaust information for their classrooms. Developed by USC Shoah Foundation, Yad Vashem, and the Anti-Defamation League, Echoes and Reflections holds workshops around the country at no cost to teachers or schools.

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“The survivors gave us their testimonies so that we would tell the world and educate future generations twenty, fifty, a hundred years from now and beyond. The testimonies go beyond what you can find in a book, beyond what you can see on a blackboard, beyond what you can type on a tablet.”

*Stephen Smith, executive director  
USC Shoah Foundation*

## Pillar: Access

The voices of survivors and witnesses offer uniquely powerful opportunities to educate, inform and inspire action. For this reason, building access to the Institute's resources, especially the Visual History Archive, is critical.

In 2002, the Visual History Archive was available at just three universities including the University of Southern California. In 2017, the number has grown to 79 subscribing universities and museums.

But the expansion is poised to accelerate dramatically.

Driving the progress is the Visual History Archive Program, a landmark initiative for the Institute launched in 2016. The Visual History Archive Program will reimagine the way people use and broadly expand access to the world's largest archive of genocide testimony.

It will accomplish this by providing new

tools to work with testimony among four primary groups: colleges and universities, secondary schools, communities and organizations.

Rapid growth is anticipated for researchers through a partnership with ProQuest, a technology company that works with colleges and universities to bring together dozens of the world's most highly used historical documents databases to create the largest single academic research resource available today.

The ProQuest partnership also calls for the production of archival-quality transcripts of all 55,000 testimonies. This massive, transformational endeavor will complement the Institute's indexing methods and further refine the process of searching testimonies for specific points of interest. Though it will take five years to complete, the transcription process is already well underway.

## Pillar: Global Outreach

With an eye toward expanding its audience beyond those who seek out the Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation broadcasts its content across many platforms.

In 2015, to underscore this priority, the Institute formally added “Global Outreach” as its fourth organizational pillar. The progress has been remarkable. The number of people intersecting with the Institute's work reached 16 million in 2016 factoring in media exposure, TV broadcasts, museum exhibits, presentations at conferences and workshops, and social media.

Leveraging existing relationships with Comcast Corporation, Discovery Communications and other global outlets, the Institute will produce and distribute a range of media products that change the way people caught up in genocidal violence are heard and understood.