

Holocaust history

It is now more than seven decades since the end of the Holocaust. The number of precious survivors continues to diminish, even as we pledge to never forget. Numerous impressive projects have been undertaken to record the history of one of the world's darkest chapters and combat the lies of Holocaust deniers, and numerous educational programs have been established to teach the history and lessons of the Shoah. Yet, we seem to be forgetting.

According to a study released last week by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), there is a particular problem with Americans under 40. According to the report:

- Sixty-three percent of all respondents said they did not know that six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust.
- Forty-eight percent couldn't name a death camp, a concentration camp or a ghetto.
- Twenty-three percent selected one of the following choices when asked, "Which of the following statements comes closest to your views about

the Holocaust in Europe during World War Two?": "The Holocaust is a myth and did not happen"; "The Holocaust happened, but the number of Jews who died in it has been greatly exaggerated"; "Not sure."

The national survey, conducted in February and March, is the first to drill down to the state level. Young adults in Wisconsin scored the highest for Holocaust knowledge; Arkansas the lowest. Disappointingly, Maryland was among the 10 lowest-scoring states.

We also note an important omission: The District of Columbia was not included. When asked why, a Claims Conference representative explained that the District's 706,000 citizens were not polled because D.C. is not a state.

On a more positive note, the survey found that two-thirds of respondents said they first learned about the Holocaust in school. That underscores the critical role that schools play in Holocaust education, and highlights the importance of efforts, legislative and otherwise, to advance Holocaust curricula that outline the enormity of the Holocaust and provide meaningful

context for students to build upon during their lifetimes.

Surveys like this are practically guaranteed to raise concern in the Jewish community, as this one has – and for good reason. But while it is true that 10% of respondents answered: "I do not believe the Holocaust happened" or "Not sure if the Holocaust happened," we also know the same percentage of Americans believe vaccines cause autism and that the 1969 moon landing was staged. And in a recent survey, close to 10% said racial discrimination it is not a problem in the United States. So, maybe the 10% outlier number in this survey isn't so unusual.

In almost all respects, however, the survey results are upsetting. That means we need to do a better job of educating our broader community about the Holocaust and its devastation. No one else is going to tell the story. No one else feels the pain and the loss like our community. So, let's pledge to focus on our promise not to forget, and do everything we can to promote Holocaust education, and to help the world understand the origins and the meaning of "Never Again." [JF](#)