

## The Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies

The 2015-16 academic year was another banner year for Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies. Among its achievements, the Center:

- Hosted former President Bill Clinton, who gave the first CHGS presidential address on mass atrocity to the entire Corps of Cadets.
- Facilitated or participated in multiple workshops and symposia involving Service Academy partners and the Department of Defense.
- Hired the first Post-doctoral Fellow in History and Atrocity Studies, Dr. Peggy O'Donnell.
- Was cited, in a national study, as one of the most successful government organizations involved in the development of atrocity prevention education. The study suggested that the CHGS be made an Army Center of Excellence.

The Center's most significant workshops and symposia, guest lectures, film screenings, publications, and upcoming events are described below.

### Guest Lectures



*President Bill Clinton Addresses the Corps of Cadets in Eisenhower Hall at the United States Military Academy, 14 October 2015*

On 14 October 2015, the Academy hosted President William J. Clinton, the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies' first presidential address. Invited by CHGS Director Dr. David Frey to speak about his experiences with mass atrocity as while in office, President Clinton addressed the entire Corps of Cadets and a select group of faculty and invited guests. In his speech, the former President also discussed West Point history and the need for leaders to understand the complexity of the world. Cadets queried President Clinton about a variety of issues, ranging from atrocities in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia to intervention in Kosovo to the continued importance of NATO.

With local and regional partners ranging from the Center for Oral History to the Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, the CHGS brought a range of speakers to the Academy. These included:

- Dr. Julian Kulski, a veteran of the Polish Home Army who fought in the 1944 Warsaw Uprising;
- A Rwandan Army Colonel who spoke to cadets about the Rwandan Genocide;
- Colonel Steven Parker of the African Center for Strategic Studies;
- Gábor Kálmán, the director of the documentary “There Once Was...” about the Holocaust in Hungary;

Perhaps the most impactful speaker was Father Patrick Desbois, who came to West Point for the National Day of Remembrance on 20 April 2016.



*Father Patrick Desbois, speaking with Chaplains, faculty and cadets over dinner. Photo credit: Dr. David Frey*

A world-renowned clergyman who has devoted his life to confronting anti-Semitism and furthering Catholic-Jewish understanding, Father Desbois is president of Yahad-In Unum, a global humanitarian organization he founded in 2004 dedicated to identify and commemorate the sites of Jewish and Roma mass executions during World War II. In his Day of Remembrance address, he spoke to an audience of over three hundred about the historic work he and Yahad have undertaken. Yahad has found thousands of previously undiscovered mass graves of many of the nearly 1.5 million Jews murdered by Nazi mobile killing units, known as *Einsatzgruppen*, in the bloodlands of Eastern Europe.

Father Desbois spoke not only of the Holocaust, but of the current genocide of the Yazidi in northern Iraq, showing a chilling short video his organization has created and speaking of the ground level work his organization does with escapees from ISIS. Father Desbois later attended a private dinner with the West Point Chaplains and select cadets and faculty, arranged by Dr. David Frey and Father Matt Pawlikowski. There, Father Desbois spoke movingly of the problems of mass atrocity particularly that ISIS has perpetrated.

### **Workshops and Symposia**

Bookending the year were a variety of programs resulting from the CHGS’s partnership with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM). In mid-September, they conducted the fifth iteration of an innovative “**Mass Atrocity Education Workshop: Teaching about the Holocaust and Genocide**” in Washington, DC. The three-day program focused on the evolution of the United States government’s capacity to prevent, mitigate, and respond to genocide and mass atrocities today, assembling scholars

and policymakers from the service academies, DoD, USAID, Strategies for Humanity, and Amnesty International.

In mid-April, 2016, the Center and the Law Department collaborated for the fourth year to convene Law and History majors to participate in the “**Law, the Legal Profession, and the Holocaust**” program. This program brings West Pointers to DC to tour multiple exhibits, conduct discussions with a Holocaust survivor, and hear lectures from Holocaust Museum senior scholars as well as experts from Georgetown and the Simon-Skjodt Center.



On 22-23 April 2016, the Center and the United States Naval Academy (USNA) Never Again Initiative, together with the USHMM’s Levine Institute for Holocaust Education, conducted the first ever **Joint Service Academies Mass Atrocity Prevention Symposium (JSAMAPS)**. The purpose of this innovative, student-led symposium, which took place in Washington, DC, and included approximately 40 undergraduates from West Point (USMA), Air Force (USAFA), Navy (USNA), and Coast Guard (USCGA), was fourfold. First, the symposium enabled military service academy cadets and midshipmen to have advanced discussions about the causes, contexts and consequences of atrocity, atrocity prevention, as well as post-atrocity justice and reconciliation with experts in the field. Second, it allowed cadets and midshipmen the opportunity to present research they conducted on the Holocaust and other genocides. Third, it encouraged the students, who will be among the first tasked with responding to future atrocities as military officers, to draw lessons from the past and learn about recent studies by peers that could lead to creative means of prevention. Fourth, it provided cadets and midshipmen with an

unparalleled leadership opportunity. A committee of cadets and midshipmen, guided by the CHGS Director and Levine Institute educators, designed this complex inter-academy symposium. Their outstanding efforts earned them coins from then Acting Secretary of the Army Patrick Murphy, who attended and spoke on the symposium's first day. The symposium was a great success and will be continued in 2017.

### **Publications**

Another joint CHGS/USHMM work, "*Ordinary Soldiers: A Study in Ethics, Law and Leadership*", first published in hardcopy in September 2014, has been adopted by ROTC Cadet Command for incorporation into its national curriculum for officer education starting in 2017. "Ordinary Soldiers" is now available in Kindle, Ebook, and pdf forms. (Available for free download at <http://www.ushmm.org/professionals-and-student-leaders/military-professionals> and at [www.usma.edu/chgs](http://www.usma.edu/chgs)).

In addition, the Center and its affiliated faculty published several works in 2016. Major Stephen Barker's "And Who Is My Neighbor? American Liberators in Transnational Context" came out in *Intolerance: Political Animals and Their Prey* and David Frey and Major Bonnie Kovatch published "After Genocide: Rwanda and the African Future," in *What is the Worst that Can Happen? The Politics and Policy of Crisis Management*.

### **Achievements**

Three cadets working on atrocity topics, Gabe Beck, Lindsay Gabow, and Curtis Valencia, won awards for their theses or their overall performance in History. The Center sent cadets to the Bundeswehr University in Germany to study the Holocaust in Munich; to the US Army War College to research Nigeria and Boko Haram; and to London to study the Mau Mau Uprising. Another cadet was slated to go to the Inoue Center for Asian-Pacific Strategic Studies to study Myanmar, but instead chose to donate bone marrow to a fellow cadet suffering from Leukemia.

Center Director David Frey also had an active year, though nowhere near as heroic as the aforementioned cadet. The USHMM selected him to be a member of its Education Committee. He consulted on several international studies on Holocaust education, had input into a national study on the implementation of Presidential Study Directive-10 on atrocity prevention, and participated in the first Genocide Prevention Summer Institute at Keene State College. Dr. Frey also met with the Deputy Commander of SOUTHCOM and is currently working with SOUTHCOM and several other organizations to develop a comprehensive plan for human rights and atrocity training and education for use throughout South and Central America.

While the CHGS continues to make significant contributions to cadet education and to national and international efforts to study and prevent atrocity, its long-term existence is not assured. If you are interested in helping West Point to continue offering broad programming, such as that described above, please contact Troy Schnack at [troy.schnack@wpaog.org](mailto:troy.schnack@wpaog.org) 845.446.1558 (office).