

# Holocaust Reading Room and Study Center

Dedicated in 2007, the Schwab Family Holocaust Reading Room in the Penn State Harrisburg library is a visible centerpiece for the first research and outreach center devoted to Holocaust and Jewish studies in the region. The center sponsors public programming, develops special collections, and promotes educational opportunities in Holocaust and Jewish studies.

The community and University focal point for Holocaust education, the Reading Room is the result of a generous donation from Harrisburg resident Linda Schwab and the late Morris Schwab. The Reading Room, located on the library's first floor, also serves as a resource for preservation of local connections to the Holocaust.

The Reading Room includes materials from Penn State Harrisburg's extensive Holocaust and Genocide Collection of books and other media, now totaling more than 1,000 titles, and provides space for gallery presentations of art and documents of the Holocaust and Jewish experience. The collection is the largest specifically devoted to Holocaust studies in Central Pennsylvania.

The Reading Room's video and audio recordings of survivors, liberators, and witnesses in Central Pennsylvania allow visitors to learn about local connections to the Holocaust, while special collections, exhibits, documents, and oral histories provide additional perspectives. The room's collection continues to grow as interviews and documents of Central Pennsylvania survivors, their children, and liberators are added with ongoing special projects and coursework.

**For more information: [harrisburg.psu.edu/chjs](http://harrisburg.psu.edu/chjs)**



## As We Remember: The Holocaust and Its Aftermath in Poetry and Paintings by Virginia Cohn Parkum

*As We Remember* is a journey through the Holocaust and the embers of its afterimage in paintings accompanied by poems. "Waiting," "Until Shiloh Comes," "Naming the Unnamed," "Sound A Mighty Blast," "Who Will Light the Lamp," "Kaddish" and other works on display recall what was lost but lives now as part of us, in our mind's eye and ear, and the heart's beat of compassion. The paintings are expressionist rather than photo-realist. We are so constantly confronted by explicit images of great intensity, whether online, in newspapers, the movies, or on television, that the emotional content is drained, be they pictures of hunger, war, or beauty. We no longer respond to them. Familiarity gradually becomes a protective wall between the images and the senses. In *As We Remember*, color, line, and form express the feeling of an image rather than a visually precise rendition. A dynamism, not pre-structured by totally familiar forms, links the viewer, object, and painting-as-object. The poems trigger further images and offer a glimpse of interpretation.

The journey begins with "Until Shiloh Comes." He is waiting, they are waiting, we are waiting, in villages, towns and cities, some for spiritual yearnings to be fulfilled, some for the fulfillment of the threats or promises of politicians and creeds.



**“Behind the Veil,”** she also waits and shares her life, and yearns.

Behind windows, behind doors, behind silence, they are **“Waiting,”** waiting, waiting...until it is safe to go out, the boycott ends, the curfew is over, for the father who has not come home, for the pounding of boots on the stairs, for the door to crash open, for the train to leave full, for the train to return empty...waiting... .

When everyone is gone, **“Who Will Light the Lamp?”** Owls don’t need a lamp to read by, and the wind can’t strike a match.

The glow in the night sky, the flaming pit, the smoking remnants of the words in Isaiah that you shall not be burned, and the flames shall not consume you, yet faith remains **“Though Flames Consume,”** day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year.

The child the butterfly saw, and life after life, gone. Truly **“Our Dance Has Turned to Mourning.”**

**“Lamentations”**...naming the unnamed...Adam named every living creature; is Cain able to give this a name? Silence heaps shame on shame.

Yet a few escape, partisans fight, poems scratched in charred wood on rags and scraps, crusts shared, the call never dies: Freedom! **“Rise Up, Daughter!”**

It is over, but never over...I was there, where no there is; I saw what no eyes can see; I felt what takes away all feeling; I cried with dry tears and silent screams, and yet, I am. **“Kaddish”**...as we remember.

The shofar! **“Sound a Mighty Blast!”** For so many and so many reasons. Hear it! Sound it! Now!

## About the Artist:



*Virginia C. Parkum*

Virginia Cohn Parkum embodies “east meets west” as researcher, artist, poet and Buddhist teacher. Her doctoral studies (University of Mannheim, Germany) and work have focused on participatory democracy and community, themes reflected in her poetry and paintings. She presented the multimedia “Art to the Heart: Using the Arts to Explore the Politics of Prejudice” to the American Political Science Association and leads workshops in meditation, Zen painting, imagery in Buddhist art, and “As We Remember.”

She has had shows at Bella Vista Gallerie, Denmark; Yale University; WITF, Harrisburg; and New Beginning Gallery, Lancaster, among others. Her awards include being named an Outstanding Woman in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Commission for Women and JumpStreet/Pennsylvania Partners in the Arts grants. Her works are in the collections of Murray Insurance, Lancaster; Penn State Harrisburg; Nordisk Collegium, Copenhagen and the University of Mannheim.

*As We Remember* is dedicated to Dr. Helen Adolf, Dept. of German, Penn State, and Dr. Richard D. Abraham, Dept. of Foreign Languages, University of Miami, both of blessed memory.

The exhibition is part of programming organized by the Penn State Harrisburg Holocaust and Jewish Studies Center. The center acknowledges the support of Dr. Mukund Kulkarni, chancellor, Penn State Harrisburg; Dr. Kathryn Robinson, director, School of Humanities; Dr. Gregory Crawford, director, library; Dr. Madlyn Hanes, Eileen Zagon, Kurt and Doris Moses, Harry Yaverbaum, Linda Schwab, and Irwin and Nancy Aronson.

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**Assistant:** James Oudenhoven

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**Website:** [harrisburg.psu.edu/chjs](http://harrisburg.psu.edu/chjs)