



Education Committee

Oral evidence: [Holocaust education](#), HC 480

Tuesday 1 December 2015

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Written evidence from witnesses:

- Dame Helen Hyde ([HOL0099](#))
- Rt Hon Sir Eric Pickles MP ([HOL0104](#))
- Paul Salmons ([HOL0089](#))
- Karen Pollock ([HOL0083](#))
- Andy Lawrence ([HOL0003](#))
- Sarah O’Hanlon ([HOL0007](#))
- Gertrude Silman ([HOL0043](#))
- Professor Michael Rosen ([HOL0001](#))

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Members present: Neil Carmichael (Chair); Lucy Allan; Ian Austin; Lucy Frazer; Caroline Nokes

Questions 1 - 55

Witnesses: **Dame Helen Hyde**, Headmistress, Watford Grammar School for Girls, **Rt Hon Sir Eric Pickles MP**, UK Envoy on Post-Holocaust Issues, **Paul Salmons**, Director, Centre for Holocaust Education, and **Karen Pollock MBE**, Chief Executive, Holocaust Educational Trust, gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Good morning and welcome to this one-session inquiry on education in terms of the Holocaust. First of all, I want to apologise for the fact that Sir Eric Pickles is stuck in

traffic and will be here as soon as he possibly can be. We have been in contact with him so we know how far away he is from the site.

I want to outline what the objectives of this session are because I think that is important in connection with the sort of questions that we will be asking. It is basically fivefold: to establish why it is important to teach the Holocaust in schools; to explore how well that is being done; to consider the focus of Holocaust education and whether other genocides should also be taught; to establish whether teacher training and the available resources are sufficient; and to hear first-hand from people delivering teaching of the Holocaust. That is what we want to focus this morning's session on.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Karen Pollock, Paul Salmons and Dame Helen Hyde, and it will give me enormous pleasure to welcome Sir Eric when he arrives. I am going to ask Paul first. Your evidence states that there is no empirical evidence that Holocaust education leads to positive attitudes about the dangers of prejudice. Are people wrong to suggest that teaching of the Holocaust can help promote tolerance?

Paul Salmons: Thank you for inviting me to speak. There is very little good empirical evidence that is compelling or convincing. Outside of Holocaust education that is true as well, in the broader field of so-called values education. This is an underdeveloped area of research, partly because it is extremely difficult to show effects of educational interventions on social attitudes. It is very hard to measure that because it is difficult to show. What kind of change are you looking for? How do you measure that? There are issues of research bias that participants in research will often try to say the sorts of things that will please the researcher.

If there are effects, it is hard to know whether that is ongoing and long-term. If there is some evidence of change, it is hard to know whether you can isolate the factors and the causes of that. Is that the educational intervention or is that other areas? It is not to say that it is not happening, it is just that it is very difficult to show. One of the areas of work that we would like to develop further at UCL, as we develop our own impact studies, is to try to develop better methodological tools that would be able to show whether or not that is taking place.

In terms of whether it is wrong to say that Holocaust education does these things, I think it is rather that it is perhaps of some limited ambition. The sorts of lessons from the Holocaust that people often speak to are issues of tolerance and anti-racism. What we find in our work and our research is that the vast majority of young people already hold those sorts of good values, so probably what is happening with opportunities where they encounter the Holocaust is that you are creating a space where they can articulate those values. That is worthwhile in itself. That is not a bad thing, but it is not evidence of a transformational change. Again, an area perhaps where we would like to develop our own work would be looking at more marginalised and disaffected young people—those who are a bit more vulnerable, perhaps too far-right extremism or other forms—to see whether we are able to have an effect in that way.

Q2 Ian Austin: Is there not strong evidence that young people who have been engaged in these programmes—I have seen dozens of young people who have travelled to Auschwitz on HET's programmes and then come back to Dudley and gone out campaigning

against the BNP—might initially already have had those values, but what it has done is encourage them and motivate them, enable and empower them to do fantastic work in the community? For me that is a phenomenal thing. Just to say, “Well, look, they are able to express this stuff”—I think that undersells the impact of this sort of work.

Paul Salmons: I said that it had tremendous value. To create a space where society is able to articulate those values should not be underestimated. That is fine. It is a good thing, as I said. I am not decrying that in any way. It is whether or not Holocaust education has a transformational effect and changes people’s attitudes and values. That is harder to show. That is something that—

Ian Austin: It would be my contention that it does.

Paul Salmons: It might; I am not saying it doesn’t.

Ian Austin: You have to come to Dudley and meet the young people and you will see. Honestly, I promise you.

Chair: Thanks, Ian. Karen, do you have any comments to make?

Karen Pollock: Yes. First of all, thank you for inviting me to give evidence. When we are talking about the Holocaust, we are talking about the planned, systematic and industrialised murder of 6 million Jewish people, which was done particularly to annihilate the entire race. When we talk about the Holocaust, we are talking about how it changed the landscape of Europe, so our mission at the Holocaust Educational Trust is very clear. It is to teach about what happened. It is to teach about those that were murdered. It is to teach about and learn about the survivors still with us, some of them here observing this session, and, yes, also to draw the contemporary lessons. While our mission is to deepen the knowledge, we would say that we witness some young people, whether it is fighting the BNP, as mentioned, but also just more becoming sensitised to the world that they live in and feeling some sort of responsibility to fight injustice. It may not be our aim, that may not have been our mission, but we would say it is often a by-product and one that we would celebrate.

Q3 Chair: Do you think teachers are doing enough to relate teaching of the Holocaust to prejudice generally in our world today?

Karen Pollock: That goes back to what I would say our mission is. I think we would want teachers to deliver quality Holocaust education covering pre-war Jewish life, the roles of each individual, whether victim, perpetrator, rescuer, bystander, to understand the context of the Holocaust, the full context, and afterwards the aftermath, liberation, as well as obviously the ghettos and the camps. If, as a result of the concerted time and effort spent on that subject, that leads to discussions of contemporary issues, we would welcome that, but I would say that it is certainly not the aim that they try to draw those contemporary issues out; I think it is an inevitability.

Q4 Chair: Bringing in Dame Helen, would you like to comment on that point that Karen has just made?

Dame Helen Hyde: I will talk specifically from the whole school because, from my point of view, as a senior leader, it has to come from the top. There are not enough senior

leaders who see it in that way. From my point of view, Holocaust education infuses the ethos of my entire school, and I have a very ethnically diverse school—one of the most ethnically diverse in Hertfordshire. The ethos is overt. Through that, we enable teachers to talk about obviously the facts—they must know the facts—but it is taught through religious studies initially because we look at moral issues and so on. It is not only the facts; it is how you transmit those facts. I have 20 trained teachers now who have been trained appropriately so they can teach it through a variety of subjects, and they do spend time discussing the use and abuse of power, the ramifications of developing power that leads to anti-Semitism, the steps towards genocide, and that goes right through.

One of the things that I have an issue with is Holocaust education is only compulsory in Key Stage 3. Everybody knows what Key Stage 3 is, don't you? If you only do it, let us say, for an hour a week or whatever for one term at 14 and you never go back to it again, you may never come back to the issues. I think it has to be later and compulsory in some sort of spiral curriculum.

Q5 Chair: Thank you, Dame Helen. A quick point from Paul before we go on to Lucy.

Paul Salmons: You asked the question, were teachers doing enough to draw these lessons? I think there is absolutely no question that that is the major aim that teachers have in teaching learning about the Holocaust. It is to explore the roots of racism and the ramifications of prejudice. Our teacher research of 2009 showed that was overwhelmingly teachers' aims. If our aim in Holocaust education is to so-called learn the lessons of the dangers of hatred and prejudice, we have done a huge amount on that. I take your point absolutely that this is something that does happen when young people encounter the Holocaust, whether that is in Auschwitz or in the classroom—it does not make that much difference—whether it is at the Imperial War Museum. They do take those lessons away, and that is a good thing as far as it goes. I am absolutely not decrying that.

The problem is that, if we want them to do more than that, if we want them to understand why and how it was that everywhere across Europe people became complicit in the murder of their neighbours, they do not know that. Our research into students' understandings of the Holocaust—I hope you will all get a copy of this; I have brought a few along and have only just published it—shows that throughout that research, students are struggling with understanding why and how it happened. They cannot answer that question. At the end of teaching and learning about the Holocaust, if young people still do not understand the term anti-Semitism, do not even recognise it, if they can list a number of victim groups of the Nazis but cannot explain why each of them was targeted, if they reduce the explanation for the Holocaust, as they do, to, “Hitler wanted to kill everyone who was different”, if they reach for age-old stereotypes of Jews to fill gaps in their knowledge, because they do not understand why it happened and so they reach for things like, “Jews were rich and so Hitler was jealous of them”, if they do not recognise the widespread complicity of people across Europe, if they do not know—

Chair: Paul, I think we have the point.

Paul Salmons: Yes. Sorry. It is a problem if they don't know that you do not have to hate anyone to be complicit in genocide.

Q6 Chair: Yes. I am going to ask a question following what Lord Sacks told this Committee in written evidence. He said that the central message of Holocaust education should be that the Holocaust was, “The greatest crime not of man against Jew, but of man against man”. Do you agree with that?

Paul Salmons: I think probably what Jonathan Sacks is saying is that it has implications for all of humanity. It is a crime against humanity. In that sense, I would accept that.

Q7 Chair: Karen, what are your thoughts?

Karen Pollock: When we are talking about the central message, we explore about people who had choices and what they could or could not have done and their roles. When we are talking about the Holocaust, we are talking about man’s inhumanity to man.

Chair: Yes. Dame Helen?

Dame Helen Hyde: On one level, yes, but it is also how a minority group was treated, and I think that has real relevance for us, and students do not make that connection. They look at it and then they never come back to it. They don’t see—

Chair: Yes. That is consistent with Paul’s point.

Dame Helen Hyde: Yes.

Paul Salmons: People were not deported to the gas chambers of Treblinka because they were human beings. They were human beings, of course, but they were deported because they were Jews. If young people don’t understand that and if they don’t see that that is different to the terrible persecution of Jehovah’s Witnesses or the genocide of the Roma, these are distinct and different crimes.

Karen Pollock: I would just add one other comment, which is just about that point about generalising. We don’t want to translate the message and the history of the Holocaust and we want to make it accessible, but you don’t want to make it that it is just so generalised or so universal that it could have happened to anyone. It was a specific event in history with a specific nature.

Chair: Yes. Lucy, would you like to talk about the overall quality of Holocaust education?

Q8 Lucy Frazer: I would. Thank you, Chairman. The APPG Against Anti-Semitism says the UK is leading Europe on Holocaust education, but we still know there are parts of the country where Holocaust education isn’t taught, so geographic areas. How do we stop that? How do we ensure that all areas are taught Holocaust education?

Dame Helen Hyde: Can I say something on that?

Lucy Frazer: Yes.

Dame Helen Hyde: I talk to heads across the country—and I do not have clear evidence the way Paul does—and it seems to me that, in many schools across the country, Holocaust education is just cursory. It is just touched on. It may be compulsory, but there

is no curriculum and there is no statutory amount of time. Therefore, there are some schools that just touch on it, two pages in a textbook, and then they go on to something else. I am not saying Rwanda and Darfur, because we teach them in my school, but, across the country, Holocaust education is touched on in order to go on to something different. It isn't going on across the country.

Q9 Lucy Frazer: Your answer to that is?

Dame Helen Hyde: It should be compulsory, with a proper curriculum and a recommended amount of time. My revolutionary thing is not at Key Stage 3, please; at Key Stage 4 as a minimum because they are older, and we have to keep students in education until 18 now.

Q10 Lucy Frazer: Do you think Ofsted has a role to play in that?

Dame Helen Hyde: Yes. I think, in terms of the assessment, there has to be a clear way of assessing that these students have learned something.

Karen Pollock: May I come in on this?

Lucy Frazer: Yes.

Karen Pollock: First of all, I think we are all aware of some excellent work going on in schools across the country, including, for instance, Dame Helen's for one, and we are also aware that it is varied. There will be some schools that have that incredible leadership: that it is a whole-school initiative, that it will happen every year, in such a concerted way, and some excellent teachers who are really committed to the subject. I echo absolutely that it is about curriculum time to spend on the subject. I think if a teacher has a pressured curriculum anyway, if it does not fit, if they do not feel a necessity, let us say, if it is for an assessment on an exam when they are under so much pressure, it is not that they do not want to teach about the Holocaust, but it may not be one of their priorities.

The incentive to make it a priority is part of that picture. Whether it is assessment and at what stage, that is a wider discussion, but I think the way to tackle it is, yes, to incentivise, to make it something that all schools feel is important, and then to provide the expert teacher training, which the UCL and the Holocaust Educational Trust are very much flag bearers for that. We go around the country, the length and breadth of the country, training as many teachers as we can but, ultimately, if this was something that teachers felt even more of an obligation on—there is some excellent work going on—then for those, let's say, that don't feel as much pressure, the teacher training is available. It needs to be that they feel the incentive to take it up.

Q11 Lucy Frazer: Dame Helen, you mentioned heads, and it has to come from the top. It is great if teachers go on courses and become trained because then they have the skills in the classroom, but how do you think you get the pivotal connection with the head? Is that something that is done at all or is that something that—

Dame Helen Hyde: I don't think it is being done enough. I don't think there is a concerted effort, and there is not the impetus for heads to do it. Funding is null and void, and there is a view out there where, if you just say to the head, "Four hours and a textbook, that is all

you need” and tick the box, that isn’t ensuring that these students are thinking and making the connections that they need to make.

Q12 Lucy Frazer: How do you achieve that?

Dame Helen Hyde: It has to come from the very top.

Q13 Lucy Frazer: How do you motivate the heads to be—

Dame Helen Hyde: For example, one way is to have a beacon school initiative, which is run by London University, but there are lots of ways where heads can be made to see that this is vital. Paul wants to say something.

Paul Salmons: I would suggest there are a number of ways if there is the political will that Holocaust education becomes strengthened. I take Karen’s point; there is absolutely some very good work in schools across the country. It is possible for young people to get a very deep and sophisticated understanding of this subject. I would suggest one possibility would be Ofsted, that it becomes part of the assessment framework and that Ofsted has a look at how this is taught. It could be in Key Stage 3. I would also prefer that it was older.

With the EBacc, history education is potentially going to get a stronger status. As an ex-history teacher, I think it is extraordinary in this country that we are one of the only countries in the developed world that allows young people not to do history after the age of 14. Everywhere else it is at least until 16. If history was a stronger subject in the curriculum, at least modern history, and you had to take something about—not just the Holocaust—I would suggest the Holocaust and education for genocide prevention. In my view, it is a disaster that the exam boards have been allowed to scrap the Holocaust from A-level history. They can say that there is a bullet point on it. With Nazi Germany, where you used to have an entire paper on the Holocaust, you now have 22 bullet points and the Final Solution will be one of those. It is there, or you could do it as a specialist study but it has pretty much disappeared from the curriculum. That has an effect because the teachers who teach at A-level will be the ones who have the most knowledge and the most expertise, and they will teach it better at Key Stage 3.

I know that from my own experience, when I had to teach Tudor history at A-level, I had not studied it since I was 12 years old, but because it was at A-level I had to learn it pretty quickly, and I know I taught it better to the Year 8 students than I would have done if I had not been teaching it at A-level. In all these ways it would be possible for Government to raise the status and the curriculum priority of Holocaust and genocide education, I suggest.

There is also an increase in, of course, academisation, which may or may not be a good thing for education, but what it does mean is that the national curriculum does not have as much force as it once did. There are all these sorts of issues.

Q14 Lucy Frazer: Just one other question. Paul, you said in your evidence—and I think I have understood it from what you have said in a previous answer—that we need to move away from a “lessons from the Holocaust” approach. From what you have just said, I think what you are saying is that, of course, those are important but there is more that we can do as well as that. Is that the right summary?

Paul Salmons: Absolutely. Yes, and I think it is more to understand better why and how the Holocaust happened. As young people get a deeper appreciation of the complexity of the past, it is my belief that they will have a more complex understanding of contemporary events and the world around them. That in itself is a good educational outcome, along with the strengthening of anti-racism and those sorts of lessons. They happen with very few lessons. You only need one or two lessons on the Holocaust to get young people to voice those aims and to mean them very sincerely. If you want more than that, obviously you need greater curriculum time and more teacher expertise, because teachers also say they want to teach this subject but they find it a difficult one to do.

Q15 Chair: Paul, thank you very much for very full answers. We do have quite a lot of questions, so if we remember that when we are answering our questions. It does give me great pleasure to welcome Sir Eric Pickles. I know you have been delayed, but thank you very much for coming.

Sir Eric Pickles: I apologise. No disrespect meant for the Committee. I am sorry.

Chair: I am sure that is the case. We fully understand that. Lucy, you would like to talk about curriculum time.

Q16 Lucy Allan: Yes. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you all for coming along today. You have made some very powerful comments already and I want to congratulate you for the fantastic work that you do in Holocaust education. Anti-Semitism is a problem that is rife today, and I think that it is so valuable what you are doing.

In terms of specific questions, drilling down a bit more into the teaching, in academies there is no requirement to teach Holocaust education, and that is something that concerns me. I think we talked a little bit earlier about making it mandatory, because it is not necessarily rolled out in a uniform way across schools. Do you think that within the academy system there should be a structure for teaching Holocaust education?

Dame Helen Hyde: Can I answer that? I think there should be. In order to increase the amount of curriculum time, obviously it has to be in history because of the historical effects, but another model could be history and religious studies, which is one that I have seen works well. History does the facts; religious study does moral issues and so on. If they are working together, you can increase the curriculum time. However, religious studies have also been downgraded. It is not an EBacc subject. That will, with time, disappear or be absorbed.

Q17 Lucy Allan: Do you think that is a realistic expectation in terms of demands on curriculum time, to have a cross-curricular approach?

Dame Helen Hyde: Yes, I do think so. If it is important—and we all believe and obviously this is showing it is important—then we have to do something. We cannot sit back and say, “Four hours and a textbook are fine”. We have to do something and make it mandatory for all schools, and I am an academy.

Karen Pollock: A couple of things. First of all, the structure of teaching about the Holocaust should be in all schools. It should be across the piste, but, recognising the

different guidelines that different schools now have to follow, it is challenging and it means going forward in terms of monitoring and assessing what is going on will be trickier. Having said that, certainly from our experience so far, many of the schools that we have dealt with that either have become academies or are academies, there is continued engagement, whether it is coming on a Lessons From Auschwitz visit, organising for a Holocaust survivor to come into their schools as part of our outreach, or coming on our teacher training. It is a challenge going forward, but actually it is the issues we have talked about already in terms of time spent and strong guidelines, which I think would be welcomed across the board.

I would just say one other thing about the cross-curriculum, which is, while we say the Holocaust should absolutely stay in the national curriculum for history, we do work with other curricula. There are lots of committed, willing teachers teaching about it in other subjects, and, as long as that is complementing and part of that whole-school approach, it can be very effective.

Q18 Lucy Allan: To drill down, if I may, a bit more into this question of the spiral curriculum, you mentioned, Dame Helen, that you would like to see it taught at a later age, so what about at an earlier age as well? Is that part of this spiral that you envisage? Primary school age: is that appropriate? Is it something they can take on board and comprehend?

Dame Helen Hyde: I think there are elements in primary school education but, if there is a real squeeze on curriculum time, I would go for a spiral curriculum from Key Stage 3, but meaning from Year 7 you could start with personal prejudice and so on, and then develop it with resources at each stage that are easily accessible, but you do need trained teachers across the board. I don't think it is that difficult. I have seen a spiral curriculum in Israel, I have seen one in America, and I know there is one that exists here too.

Q19 Lucy Allan: Does anyone else want to come in on that?

Paul Salmons: With the spiral curriculum, there is an argument for having earlier education about the Holocaust. The strongest argument is that, again, from our research, we can see that even young people who have not yet learnt about the Holocaust formally—in secondary schools, we have focused on 11 to 18-year-olds—still know something about the Holocaust. We should not only focus on what happens in the classroom. We know from learning theory that young people get their knowledge of the world and of the past from many sources: from the media, from friends, from family and from newspapers. Myths and misconceptions that are prevalent in British society, it is not a problem with teachers and students. We are absolutely not critical of schools. It is a problem of the way that Britain has chosen to contain and remember this past and to domesticate this past and not only in Britain but Europe generally. There is a lot of Holocaust commemoration and a lot of Holocaust information about, and a lot of it is very good but a lot of it tends to contain the Holocaust rather than explore it in real depth. Myths and misconceptions are prevalent, and maybe we should start addressing those at a younger age.

Lucy Allan: Thank you.

Q20 Chair: Can I ask Eric? As Secretary of State, you talked about the importance of education in dealing with the Holocaust. Do you think that the context of this discussion reflects that, and do you feel that that is the way forward ultimately?

Sir Eric Pickles: Things have changed enormously over the last 10 to 15 years in terms of the way in which the Holocaust is both remembered and taught in schools. It is certainly my view that it needs to be properly integrated into the curriculum and—the point that Karen was making—not just in terms of history, but in terms of other subjects. The problems are not entirely confined to this country. We recently did a study in, I think, Latvia, where there was a mismatch between domestic history and world history, which caused all kinds of problems of dealing with the Holocaust. By and large, I thought that the taxpayers' money was pretty well-spent on the various initiatives that this Government and the previous Labour Government had spent the money on. Obviously we saw the recent survey in terms of the penetration in terms of students, and I think there is a lot to pick up from that.

Q21 Caroline Nokes: Thanks. I apologise if I squeak at you a bit. Specifically to Karen, the Lessons From Auschwitz programme is incredibly powerful. We have just heard Paul talk about the depth of teaching. Do you think, with a focus on Auschwitz, there is a risk that it is too narrow and it is not giving students an insight beyond the atrocities that happened there?

Karen Pollock: A couple of things. The first thing is to say that the Lessons From Auschwitz project incorporates an orientation seminar where they meet and hear from a Holocaust survivor who talks about their full experience, not only their experience in a camp. They hear about prevalence report-war Jewish life across Europe. They learn about the history of anti-Semitism. They do have a wider picture of the Holocaust before they go, and they are at the age of 16, that is they will have learned about the Holocaust previously. The one-day visit itself to Auschwitz a week or so later: why do we go to Auschwitz? Not only is it the most infamous camp and logistically we can get there in one day and back, but actually there is the most to see in terms of what has been preserved to be able to understand what happened there; that is why we do Lessons From Auschwitz.

Then, when they come back, they debrief about what they have seen, have a wider context again about where that fits with the wider geography and the other camps and other experiences, to then go on and tell their peers in their next steps about their experience and become ambassadors championing the memory of the Holocaust. I would say that the value of it is, it is extremely powerful and it is something that young people remember for the rest of their lives. I come across people who have been on the visit with us over 10 or 15 years ago, and they still remember it to the moment. It is something they carry with them. It forms their thinking, but actually I think it increases a passion in the subject. Many go on to become teachers. Some have gone on to become lawyers or human rights lawyers wanting to campaign. I think that, despite lots of challenges, this is one project. There is the history education that needs to happen beforehand, and this is when they are 16, so they are perhaps more emotionally and intellectually able to absorb what they are taking in.

Q22 Caroline Nokes: Dame Helen, you have referred in some of your evidence to the visits that your school makes to other sites. We have just heard from Karen that

Auschwitz is not only the most well-known and there is the most to see there, but it is also very practical. What do you see that might be the advantages or drawbacks of also bringing in other sites?

Dame Helen Hyde: I don't think there are any disadvantages. I think there are only advantages. Auschwitz is easy to get to, and it is becoming iconic. I hate to say it but it becoming almost like a theme park—I know, it is awful, but if you go there as many times as I do a year—it has to be dealt with very carefully and it is very important. If you take students, for example, to Wannsee in Germany, and they see this beautiful house on a lake where the Final Solution was organised, it is extremely powerful, and then you could go to Sachsenhausen or wherever, or Ravensbrück. It is also very, very important and as powerful. It gives a different dimension and it feeds into what Paul was saying about myths and misconceptions.

We just held a conference of 400 students and members of the public, and we asked a question the following week when another speaker came to say, “Collaboration: what does it mean?” and they really do not understand the depth and breadth of collaboration. They know about the Final Solution but they don't know about the steps towards it.

Q23 Caroline Nokes: Can I go back to Karen on that? Also following on from what you have just said about collaboration—I will come to you, Eric, don't panic—there are other elements that concerns have been raised, particularly by the Board of Deputies of British Jews, that in many ways much of the teaching is framed around the victimisation of Jews, and it does not necessarily look at collaboration and it does not necessarily look at the regeneration afterwards. Did you want to make any comment on that, Karen?

Karen Pollock: Yes. Let me take a couple of points. The first is I should mention that, despite Lessons From Auschwitz being our flagship project that everybody seems to know about, we organise for site visits—visits, teacher training—to Lithuania, Hungary and all over Europe. It very much echoes Helen's point of being in an authentic site, seeing a local town today that was a ghetto, and, I am afraid, going into the forest and seeing where there were mass graves, the pits. It has an incredible effect on these people, when they come back, adding an extra dimension to their teaching in the classroom.

I also should mention that this year, being the 70th anniversary year of the liberation of the camps, we did organise a visit to Bergen-Belsen, liberated by British troops. It is practically possible to do others, and we do explore other options too. There is no negative about doing other sites as well. On a purely practical basis, and also because this is very much embedded in schools, Lessons From Auschwitz really is a success story.

Caroline Nokes: Thank you. Eric.

Sir Eric Pickles: I want to deal with the theme park thing in a second, but I do think this process of collaboration is something important that we need to make sure is absolutely understood in Holocaust education. Of course, you did not need to see a camp; you did not need to see stragglers on the death march to know it was there. Many people benefited from the looting of the houses, from the sale of Jewish property. It should be brought up to people that you were allowed to take 20 kilograms with you. That is the size that you can take on an aircraft. What happened to the rest of the property? Most often it was descended upon by neighbours, who looted it. That happened in Jersey, when people took

a decision to leave. I think we need to understand that the economy was boosted by the looting of Jewish property.

I suppose I might have some small responsibility for the theme park part of this, because the British Government pay for part of the restoration of the last amount of Jewish goods that were in the Canada camp and, in particular, restoring the shoes. Not polishing them to make them like new, but just to give their identity. I can see Ian's footwear and I can see your footwear. Similar kinds of shoes, almost identical kinds of shoes, were among them, and I think it is terrifically important to understand that the people who were murdered were not predetermined that they were going to be murdered there. They had hopes that they were going to have a good life. They were going to raise kids. They were going to contribute to society. I think it is important that we always try to put it on to a very human level, and that is why it is important that you spend a lot of time worrying about things like the barbed wire and making sure that it is going to be there, that you make sure that all the apparatus is still there, so it remains a chilling experience.

In order to bring up the collaboration, the way in which an entire society was dragged down by the brutality of the Nazis, you do not do that by diminishing Auschwitz. Auschwitz I think is enormously important as a killing centre, but I do concede that I think about 15% of the victims of the Holocaust went through Auschwitz, so you are more likely to be shot in a pit, worked to death or destroyed in a quarry. Nevertheless, it is there and it does not diminish the story.

Q24 Caroline Nokes: How well do you think it fits with teaching about Poland's role at the time? Is there too much focus on the Jewish victims as opposed to the Polish victims, who were almost as numerous?

Karen Pollock: If you go around Auschwitz, there is very clearly a barrack paying tribute to Polish victims and you very much get the Polish story. I think we present the Holocaust and the subject of Auschwitz in its context and accurately. That is all we can strive to do.

Caroline Nokes: Dame Helen, did you want to come in?

Dame Helen Hyde: On the Poland issue, I think any visit to Poland, you teach about the Poland role and the suffering of the Poles as well, obviously. To come back to the collaboration thing—which I think is understated—you just need to take children to Holland. You do not have to go all the way to Eastern Europe. If you go to Holland, there are concentration camps in Holland, slave camps, and they are accessible to a Year 10 student. If you are building that into your spiral curriculum and you have a cost problem, because schools now have huge cost problems, you can look at Holland and learn a great deal about collaboration and the depth and breadth of it.

You also touched on something about the end of the war and the regeneration of Jewish life. I think any good Holocaust education is not going to focus on the victimhood of Jews. That is only the way that outside people see them and the way the Nazis treated them. Good Holocaust education teaches about the loss, the vibrancy, the void, and then those that survived. We are lucky enough to still have survivors, but we are also lucky enough in this country to have the Wiener Library. There is a wealth of information, documentation, things that we have not even touched. There is where we should be looking as well.

Students and also young adults, people who did not get good Holocaust education 10 or 15 years ago. Make this material accessible.

Caroline Nokes: Thank you.

Q25 Ian Austin: Very quickly, I think Sir Eric is completely right about this. I have visited other camps—Majdanek, Treblinka, Theresienstadt—but the thing about going to Auschwitz and the impact it has on young people is when they see a mountain of hair or the glasses or the suitcases, and it brings home to them the individual aspect about this, because they can all imagine carrying a suitcase or whatever. But I want to ask, in this Lessons From Auschwitz programme, what is the most powerful bit of it? Is it the trip to Auschwitz? Is it hearing from the survivors? I want to say as well, Chair, Zigi Shipper is in the audience—who I have heard speak and met many times, and he does phenomenal work—and I think we should recognise the fact that he is here. I want to ask about the impact of survivor testimony as part of all of this.

Karen Pollock: I think that we are lucky that we have Holocaust survivors still with us and still prepared to travel the length and breadth of the country, giving their testimony in schools, reliving the memory of what they went through over and over again, and it would be remiss of me not to also mention Susan Pollack, who is sitting here as well, who also gives her testimony across the country.

What we find is you can be in the most disruptive classroom with the most difficult young people, but when a Holocaust survivor stands up and gives their story you can hear a pin drop. The whole room is captivated, and they are engaging—I hope the survivors that we work with do not mind me saying this—with individuals who, against all odds, survived this incredible ordeal, yet still have the determination to tell their story. These brave people who are prepared to repeat what they went through are not going to be with us forever, and they know that it is up to organisations and individuals like us to carry their legacy. They rely on expert teacher training so that the next generation is hearing what happened and why. They are relying on the next generation who visit Auschwitz and are ambassadors to carry their story. Yes, they are also relying on the next generation to be sensitised to the world they live in to prevent something like that happening again.

In one year alone, last year, we reached over 100,000 young people through survivor testimony, which is pretty amazing, and I would say that is down to only a small number of people who, in their 80s and older, are prepared to get on the train, get in a car and go and deliver their story.

Q26 Chair: I have witnessed the impact of a survivor in one of my own schools in my constituency and, just as you say, it is quite remarkable and you can see it.

Sir Eric Pickles: It is also very powerful hearing from the children of survivors. I can recall a film that was put together and the granddaughter talking the words of a grandmother that they had never heard, that the Nazis wanted to destroy, remove, and in a way that continues. Of course, as you know, we are putting enormous resources into recording testimony, and in some cases—at Newark—they are recording it, very high-tech, with the possibility of interaction to 1,000 common questions.

Chair: Yes. Thank you. Ian, you are going to quickly talk about coverage of other genocides and training supporting teachers.

Q27 Ian Austin: Yes. I would like to ask Dame Helen: you mentioned that you talk about Rwanda and other genocides. Does having to learn about these show that humanity has not learned the lessons of the Holocaust effectively enough?

Dame Helen Hyde: How long do you have for that answer?

Chair: Not that long.

Dame Helen Hyde: I am a head teacher. I don't talk for very long at all; I let others do the talking. I am not going to answer that question. For us as educators it is important to join the dots, because you can join the dots. If you look at how the Holocaust happened and to, for example, Rwanda, you can see that some things were similar. For the students, if they are taught properly, they can look at the stages or the steps towards genocide and see whether they are learning lessons, whether humanity will ever learn a lesson. I think a good book for you to read is the ex-Chief Rabbi's book called "Not in God's Name". I will not answer any further. I will let the philosophers among us.

Chair: Any other questions?

Ian Austin: No, that is fine by me. Yes.

Chair: What about training support for teachers?

Ian Austin: That is where I am moving to next, isn't it?

Chair: Yes.

Q28 Ian Austin: Yes. I would like to ask Karen and Paul how the approaches to teacher training differ, the work that you do.

Karen Pollock: I am guessing it is for you, Paul, because I have spoken about it.

Paul Salmons: It is not only HET and UCL that offer teacher development in this area. We are not the only organisations. In terms of teacher development in this country, you do not need any specialism at all to set up a teacher development programme. You could be a local garage-owner and set up a teacher development programme in maths, and if people want to come to it, they can come to it. I am not particularly interested in comparing ours to HET's. I think, in terms of our work, I would just speak to what we can say about UCL.

As far as I am aware, we are the only quality assured provider of teacher education because we are answerable to QAA as part of a university. We are answerable to the REF, the Research Excellence Framework. Our university submitted its last REF, in which it was found to be outstanding worldwide and also the leader in the UK. The university chose our centre as one of its case studies, so obviously the university values what we are doing. We have also just been awarded the Queen's Anniversary Prize, the highest accolade a UK organisation can have. Again, our centre is part of it, so I guess that is—

Q29 Chair: That is excellent stuff, Paul. The key question is the difference.

Ian Austin: Also, if I can just say, availability of teacher training, and how can teacher training be made more available?

Karen Pollock: Yes. Sure. One thing is definite: we face the same challenge. The challenge that we and other organisations face is the pressure on teachers in schools in terms of curriculum time that we have talked about, the prioritisation and incentivisation. There was some research that the UCL delivered in 2009 that said 80% of teachers were self-taught. It was 80-something per cent. Four out of five teachers had taught themselves how to teach about the Holocaust.

We reach 2,000 teachers a year. That means there are thousands of other teachers we are not reaching. What do we need to do? We are making it as available as possible. It is free of charge, we go around the country, but there needs to be the incentive for them to come. I should add obviously that our teacher training is from our charitable funds, from charitable donations. While we may have different class activities or what we would produce, I think ultimately our aims are the same, and certainly our teacher training is very much guided by the research that the UCL delivers.

Chair: Thank you.

Paul Salmons: Can I briefly add something? Working in a university that specialises in teacher education generally, it is not about Holocaust education. What our work does is very much draw upon research, so it is a research-informed programme. It deals with the latest learning theory and latest educational pedagogy, and I guess that is what we offer to an accredited standard.

Chair: Thank you.

Q30 Ian Austin: Could I ask Sir Eric? The learning centre that the commission is going to establish: what progress has been achieved on this, and what role will this have in supporting and training teachers?

Sir Eric Pickles: We are currently waiting for a report from the Education Sub-committee of the commission, which I think is meeting next week. Is that correct?

Karen Pollock: Yes. That is us, perhaps.

Q31 Ian Austin: Could we have a look at that report?

Karen Pollock: We have not met yet.

Sir Eric Pickles: I think there is an important point about the commission, which I do feel strongly about. We must not stifle out what is there. There is a limited amount of funding that is available, and what should be offered by the commission should enhance it. It should make it easier. It should make it simple to signpost to the different things that are available. I am looking with enormous interest to what you have to say, even more so as I got myself seconded on to this committee, to pursue that. I think it is an important thing. It could be an enormous deal. The last thing we want to do is to stifle out the energy and the vitality that exists in different groups.

Q32 Ian Austin: Could I ask Sir Eric as well? Given the contemporary challenges that we face in Britain around radicalisation and the need to promote British values, to what extent do you think that learning about the Holocaust can teach us about Britain's role and Britain's history? For example, while it is undeniably the case that Britain could have done much more before and during the war, when other countries were rounding up Jewish people and putting them on trains to concentration camps, Britain provided a safe haven for thousands of children through the Kindertransport, and Britain fought alone and brought the war to an end, and it was British troops, as we have heard, that liberated the camps. I think that tells us something about Britain, not just about the Holocaust, but about Britain and about who we are as a people.

Sir Eric Pickles: I don't mean this at all rudely, Mr Austin, but I think—

Ian Austin: That is quite a worrying introduction to an answer.

Sir Eric Pickles: —the biggest thing in dealing with the Holocaust is a kind of collaborator, and I am not accusing you of that. Everybody can imagine themselves being a victim of the Holocaust, but few people can imagine themselves being a perpetrator. The Holocaust was not committed by monsters. They did not start out as monsters, but the process turned them into monsters. They were rewarded in terms of promotion, in terms of the amount of brutality that they would show. The point that Dame Helen was making early on, the collaboration, you might not have involved yourself because you were anti-Semitic, or you might have been indifferent, or it was the law, after all. It was the law. "Don't ask. Don't ask questions. We will not get ourselves involved" or you might have enjoyed the fruits of the Holocaust. You might have enjoyed your neighbours' possessions, or you might be quite happy to get some quite nice things by not paying very much.

In terms of this country, let me just say this. I had the honour of meeting Nicholas Winton a few years ago, and he was a great man, but we need to remember why that Kindertransport took place. Britain was not going to accept the parents. It would accept the children, and he had to be very persuasive of that, but they would not accept the parents. You cannot get away from the fact that—that terrible phrase—it was a far-distant country of which we knew nothing. These folks are far too intelligent and bright to say this, but I am stupid so I will say it. I think that the lesson from the Holocaust is how a civilised society, like ours, can be turned, turned in a very short time, so the utterly unreasonable thought that a liberal society can be turned into an oppressive society in a relatively short time. All these brilliant people will tell me why I am wrong.

Chair: That is a very good point.

Karen Pollock: A very quick addition, if I may. All I would say in answer to that question, and echoing Sir Eric, is I think what Sir Eric is demonstrating is it is complex. The subject of the Holocaust is complicated. While we may have opened our doors for young children to come in, their parents could not come with them, and I think that in a sense is just an example of the difficult dilemmas when describing what happened. We can be proud of certain elements of Britain's role, and at the same time there are elements of questions of: could Britain have bombed Auschwitz? Could the Allies have bombed Auschwitz? The idea of Holocaust education is to explore all of that with critical thinking and to reach your

own conclusions. I don't think it is something we should not be proud of, the examples you cited.

Q33 Ian Austin: I think the Government should fund Holocaust education, and I have been a strong advocate of that, but not just to learn about this as a stand-alone academic inquiry, but because of what it teaches us about who we are as a country and the lessons we can learn from it. That is the whole point for funding the commission, surely.

Chair: Helen.

Dame Helen Hyde: Could I link one or two of these? I am just going to be pragmatic. Going back to what you were saying about teacher training and so on, one way that it could happen is through the teaching schools, but they have lost all their funding. They are not funded any more. My view is that every person new to the teaching profession should have Holocaust education. You could do that through universities, teaching training colleges and so on. Academies are part of these teaching schools.

The second thing I want to say links to the question on the commission. First, I don't think the commission should be used as an excuse to remove funding from either or all of the organisations. They should still get their funding from wherever they are getting it, the DfE or somewhere. The commission has no role in their current funding and should not. I am one of the only independent commissioners and, since last week, I have decided I am going to speak my mind on every occasion. For me, the single most important thing of this commission and this learning centre is collaboration. We have been talking about old collaboration, but we need modern collaboration. We do not need everybody fighting for their own corners. We have to all get together and collaborate so that the outcome for our students, teachers and anybody else works.

Chair: We are coming toward the end of our time. Lucy, you have a quick question, I hope.

Q34 Lucy Frazer: Very quick. What we are hearing obviously is there is so much to learn and it is not a bullet point. All the things that you have said exemplify that this is a huge subject that you cannot teach in two hours or whatever. My experience of learning about the Holocaust—there was not any education at school—is that I went to Anne Frank's house and I went to Yad Vashem and I heard a survivor and I have been to Auschwitz, and all have a very powerful impact on my view of the Holocaust, but they are all out of schools. We have been exploring teacher training in schools, we had a question about Ofsted in schools, but these are actually extra-curricular things, so what is it? Those are the powerful experiences that the children remember, seeing the shoes and those things. Those are what you see. What is it outside of the school that would be beneficial for you to be able to give children those experiences?

Paul Salmons: First, on that issue of the classroom, we should not undermine the power of a well-taught lesson, which can also be profoundly moving and long-lasting and can deepen knowledge.

Lucy Frazer: Of course not. Yes.

Paul Salmons: I think it is essential that work is done in the classroom before any visit, whether that is the Imperial War Museum where I used to work, whether it is Auschwitz, with Lessons From Auschwitz, because you should not go to those sites to gain knowledge and understanding. You get a different kind of experience, a very powerful one, as we have already heard.

In terms of what the commission could potentially add, I would suggest that the area that is underdeveloped, not only in this country but internationally, is how you relate the Holocaust to other genocides and to issues of education for genocide prevention. There is an international movement now that is going in that direction. I don't think that if the Government is going to spend at least £50 million—and who knows how much more that might become—that it should be out of date in that aspect, but it should be world-leading and it should try to address those very difficult issues head-on.

Chair: Thank you, Paul. Can we have one minute, Lucy, on the funding, just one quick, pithy question?

Q35 Lucy Allan: A quick question on funding, yes, because we have dealt a little bit with it. Sir Eric, I wonder if you could confirm. Do you see your role as to make the case within Government for increased funding for Holocaust education?

Sir Eric Pickles: Let me give you a tricky political answer. Yes.

Lucy Allan: Good. Glad to hear it.

Chair: Thank you all very much indeed for this session. It has been extremely interesting and thought-provoking, so much appreciated, thank you.

Examination of Witnesses

Witnesses: **Andy Lawrence**, History Teacher, Hampton School, **Sarah O'Hanlon**, Holocaust Educational Trust Ambassador, **Gertrude Silman**, Honorary Life President, Holocaust Survivors' Friendship Association, and **Professor Michael Rosen**, Professor of Children's Literature, Goldsmith University of London, gave evidence.

Q36 Chair: Welcome to our second session. We have only half an hour for this session so we must have pithy questions. The two Lucys have been briefed just a moment ago on that, and Ian knows the importance of pithiness as well. But that applies to the answers too, because we do want to get to the core of these issues. I am going to kick off. In your own experiences have you seen examples of Holocaust education promoting tolerance? Gertrude?

Mrs Silman: I think it is a very difficult one to answer because I go into classrooms and speak. Like from the previous session, we do get feedback and the feedback comes in the form of letters and things, and we think that we are making quite a—

Professor Rosen: Exactly as we heard earlier. It is very difficult to say it promotes tolerance as such. I can think of two examples—one when I had to confront Holocaust denial in a sixth form college. Denial is a very particular form of ongoing persecution, so it is not so much a matter of tolerance but how you deal with ongoing anti-Semitism and racism. I confronted it directly with my personal testimony of my own family. The other example I am thinking of is with my daughter doing Key Stage 3 History and the way in which the Holocaust was put in the context of other genocides, which I thought was remarkable; absolutely a remarkable piece of history. Talking to her about her experiences, I can't say it promoted tolerance. It certainly promoted understanding and a world outlook.

Sarah O'Hanlon: When I have done a lot of lessons with students—because I am an ambassador and I did the HET project—we have tried to look at the contemporary relevance of the Holocaust. We have connected it with things like racism and anti-Semitism, in this country. In that way it is promoting tolerance because the students did not quite realise that it only takes several steps to almost get to that point and you are stopping these steps in their tracks. If you look at these steps and realise that maybe separating somebody, identifying them as being separate from you, that is intolerance; trying to pick up on that and realising that is a major issue and students might do this and not realise they are doing it or not realise the impact that it can ultimately have if it is a massive group doing it.

Andy Lawrence: I am a teacher. I hope that all my lessons implicitly promote tolerance but it is not an explicit aim. I don't think we should underestimate our young people. I think they come in to the room with a great deal of a sense of tolerance and so on. I think the implicit aim of lessons should be to promote tolerance but explicitly, no.

Q37 Chair: Michael, you have said there is, “a fruitful discussion to be had” in the context of Holocaust education to today's challenges of racist groups, potential future genocides and the refugee issue. How should teachers bring those modern-day concepts into connection with the Holocaust?

Professor Rosen: For me the vital moment—and Sir Eric touched on it—is the transition from what was a democratic society with many of the institutions that are identical to our own. If we look at the nature of the Weimar Republic in 1920s, and how the transformation took place prior to acts of persecution and genocide of the Jews, there is a set of acts of legislation brought in by the Nazis as they gained power; the so-called Reichstag Decree and the enabling Act, which as it happens my daughter is learning about this week. These are the crucial transformations of a democratic state into a fascist state that enabled the Holocaust to happen.

The point is that we can point at persecutions throughout history and that are going on now. The difference between random persecutions—frightful and awful though they are—and the Holocaust is that there is a state apparatus that enabled it to happen. Therefore, the transformation is crucial and it seems to me that kind of discussion is vital. Then we can look at regimes around the world and ask, if we are looking at a regime, is in transition? Is it doing the same thing? Is it different? How is it different? That seems to me a very important discussion to have.

When we look at the refugee crisis at the moment, and we look at the way in which distinctions are being made between refugees and migrants and economic migrants, different labels being put on them, how can we turn them back? I find myself instantly reminded of the distinctions made with my own relatives where, because they were foreign-born Jews in France, they were put on a particular list that enabled them to be deported, ultimately, to Auschwitz and to die and the so-called native-born Jews in France were not. Those kinds of distinctions, and how they were made through the instruments of the State, not random beatings up in back streets, those are the kinds of things that we should draw attention to.

Chair: Thank you very much, Michael. That was a good answer; long but good.

Q38 Ian Austin: I would like to ask you a couple of questions about how well the Holocaust is taught in schools. Andy, you obviously do more on this than most teachers and your school does more on it than most schools. The pupils who come to your school for your commemoration events, how less well-informed are they about the Holocaust than your pupils? What is the outcome of this? At the end of their time at school, what is the difference that you have made? What are your pupils going away with that pupils in other schools haven't got?

Andy Lawrence: To set the context, every year we have Holocaust Memorial Day events. Last year we had 350 people from our community; 10 schools from our borough and 100 students. In a way it is a self-selecting audience because the teachers who are interested brought their kids along; teachers that were not interested weren't. A lot of those teachers who came along had been on training courses run by UCL and HET and so on, and so I think those students who came along were well informed. Paul Salmons from UCL came and ran a session for us before the survivors spoke and the students were engaged, they were knowledgeable, they were brilliant.

One thing that I point to that perhaps students from my school go away with is a sense of being an activist. Perhaps one thing they go away with is, yes, a sense of wanting to enhance tolerance and to be worried about the refugee crisis and bullying and so on, but they do not lose sight of the 'never-again' question, which I think we are in danger of losing sight of. They go away with a sense of, "We've got to do something about this" and so that is why they produced the only textbook for schools on the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. That is their sense of, "We would need to do something". That is the key thing they go away with.

Q39 Ian Austin: Gertrude, the Survivors' Friendship Association raises concerns about the lack of knowledge of the Holocaust among school children. Is that something that you have experienced personally?

Mrs Silman: I feel my experience is certainly different from the other three speakers here. I am a non-professional in that sort of sense. I go into schools and it is very variable. If the teachers have prepared the pupils, it is fine. If they haven't, it can be a disaster. On the whole, I think the schools we visit, and the universities and other community centres and so on, are on the whole always very receptive of what we give.

My attitude to all this is not from the teaching angle but what would I like to see. My feeling is first that the Holocaust is extremely special. As a child refugee, and having lost most of my family, I have a much more personal interest in this. I want the Holocaust to be a special, small unit, which could be generally taught but because it is such a huge subject it cannot be done in schools on their own. I feel where we are missing out, because we now have quite a lot of Holocaust witnesses and films and so on, a great deal of that can be used. I do a lot of speaking to primary school children. If you have the rightly tailored talk—as a pseudo Kindertransport I can tell them about my own experiences—a child of about 10 or 11 as I was then, will identify. Similarly, I can tell them about the camp issues and so on, not in the primary schools but in the next sector, because a lot of my family went through Auschwitz.

The other thing I find a little bit hurtful is we hear a great deal about Auschwitz; we never hear anything about Czechoslovakia. We don't know anything about Slovak uprisings. We don't know that Slovakia paid per capita to have their people deported into the camps. All those things are totally unknown. You can't teach everything. This is the problem. The subject is huge. I would like to see a kernel module, if somebody can devise one, for the different key stages, which gave some basic facts but don't worry about the details. Use your case studies and research the higher up you get. There is a huge amount of research. For example, I am going to Slovakia to the launch of the Sereď Holocaust museum on 26 January, just coming up. It has taken them a long time.

Britain has had a difficult situation because they were not invaded by the Nazis and, therefore, very few people have a close relationship with many Jewish people. We in the north of England have far fewer Jewish people than you have in London and, therefore, London is a special case. I feel we have a strong case for having a northern centre as well for doing and looking after this education. I am sorry if I haven't answered the question.

Chair: It is a good answer. Thank you very much, Gertrude. Very important points raised there. Lucy Allan, you are going to talk about the role of survivors, which is fitting following that very interesting point.

Q40 Lucy Allan: Yes. I would like to ask questions around the importance of personal testimony. Perhaps moving to you first, Sarah. You organise visits of survivors to schools. What is it that is so impactful about that personal testimony?

Sarah O'Hanlon: Having the person there and being able to ask them questions and them respond automatically to you and speak to a wide audience, has an individual impact on each person and also you get to see the individual impact of what persecution, what hatred, what racism even can lead to. You can see the little stories and, as you were saying about the individual strands of the Holocaust, each person experienced it in a different way, so the more people that you can hear it from the more you are getting educated on it. That is the opportunity where you can go and expand on it or you can research something that might have interested you particularly and find out more about it. It opens up a lot more doors but in a short period of time.

Q41 Lucy Allan: Gertrude, what age do you think is an appropriate age for a youngster to be introduced to personal testimony, because it is so powerful?

Mrs Silman: Well, 10 is probably as young as I would go although I must admit I have spoken to children in a group between six and 10, but you have to be very careful how you do it. Each stage is different.

Q42 Lucy Allan: Yes. I think that is right. Andy, how do you balance the use of survivor testimony with the wider context? Obviously it has to be put within its context to make it meaningful.

Andy Lawrence: Absolutely. The key point here is that teachers successfully set the context, they set the groundwork, they build the foundation, and then the survivor can come along and build on that.

Going back to your point on age, I think the context is everything and I think the survivors are experts, whether they are Rwandan survivors, Bosnians, or survivors from the Holocaust. They are experts at moderating their message to fit. I am in awe of them as teachers I really am. I wish I could teach as well as they do. They moderate the message. You can hear a pin drop. Mala Tribich came to our event of 350 people. She stood up and spoke for 90 minutes and the place was just in awe of her. It was wonderful. Teachers must build the foundation and then the survivors can enhance things incredibly.

Q43 Lucy Frazer: Michael, we are going to have fewer and fewer survivors as time goes on. Do you think it is appropriate for children of survivors to take on any role at all?

Professor Rosen: I do, absolutely. I think it is crucial. Children and relatives—I am a great nephew of victims of the Holocaust—have information and documents. We sometimes have physical objects. Our testimony is very personal but at the same time at a distance. Although it may not be exactly as emotional it means we can give it some kind of context about how we got here and why we are alive, so the other element we bring to bear is, “That could have happened to me”. When I look at the history, say of my relatives, I can point at France and say, “If I was living in France at that time and been like that, that would have happened to me. If the Nazis had invaded Britain that could have happened to me”. That is immediately powerful.

When you are standing in front of people of any age and you say, “That could have happened to me. I am just Joe Bloggs. I am just somebody walking around, but because I have a label on me that says ‘Jew’ that could have happened to me”. That is a very powerful thing to say. It is nowhere near as vital and as immediate as the survivors and, goodness me, there is nothing more vital than that. We do of course have videos and so on and we will keep those, and oral testimonies that way, but the point is that we relatives have a crucial contribution to make as well and that should go on; indeed.

Q44 Lucy Frazer: Gertrude, last year BBC Learning produced a film about your experiences and you have already mentioned the importance of film. Is there anything more that you think could be done as one generation moves on?

Mrs Silman: Once again I have to go out of your question because I think all the modern technology is fantastic. I know that we with the Holocaust group have a lot of material, we have produced a lot of material and we want to go now and bring it out into the open. But my feeling is we are missing out a great deal because I personally feel—and this is a

personal opinion—it is such a wide subject that, in fact, it is not just what we teach and the artefacts and how we present it, the fact is it is a much deeper root than that. In my opinion we need to have a proper economy so that people are not in an unemployed state where they are frustrated, because frustration leads to this prejudice and hatred and to me that means we are not getting to the fundamentals. The Holocaust was an absolute example of where things have gone wrong due to the economy partly. Can you see what I am getting at here? This is what I feel we are missing in all our education discussions. Education has to be done, all this has to be done, but it is a far wider question than that.

Q45 Lucy Frazer: Sarah and Andy, what more do you think could be done?

Andy Lawrence: Two points. I think technology will play a part and the work that the UK HMF is doing at the moment will be pushing that. Also, when you said “survivors” I assume you were talking about Holocaust survivors?

Lucy Frazer: Yes.

Andy Lawrence: I think we should not neglect survivors from other genocides because it is perhaps part of the legacy of Holocaust survivors that we should empower the survivors of other genocides too, so I do not think we should neglect that area either.

Sarah O’Hanlon: It is so important to have people from other genocides now especially because there will not be a stock forever of Holocaust survivors. I think it will act as a good transition to looking into other genocides. Maybe if we teach history and we explore it and we question the genocide within history we need to look at other genocides in other aspects, so like in English, in Citizenship. I think that is where we can introduce other genocides into it because when I have done lessons before students have asked, “Why are we learning this because there has not been a genocide since? It is not important. Why are we learning about the organisation of it, the steps to genocide?” and they have no idea and these are students in Year 10. I think that is when we need to introduce it because that is when it becomes relevant and they are interested and engaged then.

Q46 Lucy Frazer: Do you think there is a risk, if we do that, that you would dilute the Holocaust element? No?

Andy Lawrence: Very briefly: absolutely not. No one is saying that and I don’t think any right-minded teacher would replace teaching the Holocaust with other genocides. I think the point is—and there is plenty of anecdotal evidence out there—that by teaching both you enhance understanding of the Holocaust.

Mrs Silman: I very strongly feel we have to use the Holocaust as the tool for trying to make things better. We don’t need to have much of a look around us to see what is happening. We have not taught properly; we have not got the message through; we have to link the two. It has to be relevant for today. The Holocaust has happened. It was the most terrible thing—I know from my personal experience—but somehow it has to be linked to what is happening today so that it is relevant to the people in the classroom.

Q47 Chair: Andy, you have made those links in your classroom, according to the evidence. How did your pupils react?

Andy Lawrence: They reacted very well. Perhaps to develop that point, I did not reduce the amount of time I taught about the Holocaust. I just did it perhaps in a more comparative kind of way. The findings from our anecdotes—it is nothing like the UCL work, which is brilliant—what it showed is that those pupils who have studied the Holocaust and another genocide, they are more angry about other genocides occurring. They feel that they understand the Holocaust better as a result of comparing it to another genocide and they felt that the Holocaust illuminated other genocides and so on. It was a very positive thing to do.

Q48 Chair: Michael, I know you want to say something but I want to ask you something as well because you have said that the Holocaust was a scientifically-engineered attempt to eliminate a people—that is your quote—and you would like to distinguish that from other genocides. How are you going to do that?

Professor Rosen: That is precisely so. It was in that area that I was going to talk. I have been confronted several times when talking about the Holocaust with young people, “Why are you going on about that when there is the slave trade?” or when there are other examples that were given to me. It seems to me that people get quite cross about it and imagine that you are creating a kind of league table of persecution. I say the issue is not the outcome specifically. Obviously the sheer numbers of the attempted genocide of all Jews are frightening and awful, but the key thing is not an issue of the fact that that dead person is more valuable than another or is there some special case at that end of the process. It is the other end. It is about intention, so that is the politics of the Holocaust rather than the matter of its enactment.

I have always said that every genocide will have different aspects of how it was brought about and what the intentions were. The intention of the slave trade is different and the persecution of Africans and then later of African Americans, in the British Empire indeed, is a different process from what took place in the Holocaust. This particularly applies to, say, upper-school students and to sixth-formers. You can engage in this and that is why you are making distinctions because this is a political matter of how we created the Holocaust, how Europe created the Holocaust. That is the crucial aspect: that this was intentionally organised, scientific, modern state. It was us. This is the frightening thing about the Holocaust. Germany 1930 is not that different in terms of its institutions from Britain today or many of the other countries. I have made the point before, but that is what is crucial in terms of the intentionalism.

Q49 Chair: It is a question of context, though, isn't it, because the context of the Holocaust was in fact the collapse of civilisation in Europe because of the Nazis and because of the war and the impact of it?

Professor Rosen: I don't think it was a collapse of civilisation. The Nazi organisation, the Third Reich, was not a collapsed civilisation. It was a very well organised society that satisfied many of its inhabitants. Again, as Sir Eric pointed out, people were rewarded in various ways but also it was very “well” organised. It is not a collapse of civilisation; it is not analogous to say, “When the whole of the organisations of the state have collapsed”; precisely the opposite. By and large the organisation of the state was very good, right the way up until the very end. It is worth remembering that the Nazi state did not collapse until the Russians arrived in Berlin.

Q50 Ian Austin: To argue that there is a similarity between Britain today and pre-war Germany ignores some of the historical anti-Semitism in Germany before the war. The long-established historical anti-Semitism in Poland, for example, and in France is completely different.

Professor Rosen: We enjoyed our own historical anti-Semitism as well; let's not get too hoity-toity about it. The point is Europe had its anti-Semitisms, each one taking different forms in different ways. It is well known, for example, that when testimony came out around Auschwitz the complaint was made by a certain fairly high-up person in the civil service, "Well, the Jews do complain quite a lot, don't they?" This was a point made, so let's be quite clear. Let's not get too superior about it. The point is I was talking about the institutions of the state. I wasn't saying that somehow or other either Germany or Poland or Britain were better or worse. I wasn't creating a league table of anti-Semitisms either. The key thing is that the institutions of the states of Europe were very similar at the point at which the Holocaust was enabled.

Ian Austin: Of course it is possible; of course it is possible—

Professor Rosen: We do not know what might have happened if the Nazis had invaded here; whether it would have been any different here from France or Poland or Holland or Denmark.

Ian Austin: I know. But Professor Rosen—

Professor Rosen: We don't know. Let's remember Guernsey, shall we?

Q51 Ian Austin: Of course we don't. We don't know, Professor Rosen, because they didn't invade here.

Professor Rosen: They did get to Guernsey and all nine Jews who were in Guernsey were deported to Auschwitz.

Q52 Ian Austin: The reason, Professor Rosen, why they did not invade Britain is that Britain fought back, on its own, and brought freedom and fought for it: not just our freedom but for freedom—

Professor Rosen: We did not do that on our own and it is wrong to tell the histories that way. We were allied with two world powers, America and the Soviet Union.

Chair: We are straying well off the point here so we will—

Ian Austin: I am sorry, Chair, but it is absolute nonsense to claim there is some similarity because of individual examples of anti-Semitism by individual people in Britain with pre-war Germany or pre-war Poland. It is just nonsense.

Q53 Chair: Let's stop. I am drawing a line under this line of discussion. Sarah, you are an ambassador. How did you get that role? How does it affect you?

Sarah O'Hanlon: I was in my sixth form, lower sixth, and our teacher just applied for us and then told us that we had got a place. After that I wanted to carry on the message and tell people what I have seen and get more people to understand.

I always think the most important thing for Holocaust education is to make sure that it does not happen again; for the contemporary impact, what it can have now. That is the lesson that you try to pass on and show what this can lead to. That is the reason that I took part. But I feel there does need to be some kind of reform of how people are selected for that programme. When I went obviously I was very interested and most people were so engaged with it, but I think some people struggled when they went and dealt with it differently and perhaps were not prepared as thoroughly by their teachers, not by the Trust; we got as much as we could booklet-wise and things. I feel the teachers from other schools, maybe, sent students just because it was a lottery; they could send people on the programme and they wanted to make sure it would look good on reports or whatever.

Those students were not reacting well. They were walking all over; perhaps laughing and things and not paying any attention. That could have been used somewhere a lot better on other students who had a context to it and could take away everything from it and understand it. That's what you get with a lack of understanding.

Q54 Chair: You feel visiting Auschwitz is very important to young people, the experience and the knowledge they glean from it?

Sarah O'Hanlon: Definitely, because you see it first hand and you can witness it and experience it and you see the humanity. Even the sheer scale of it, I think that gives you some indication of the organisation.

Q55 Chair: Andy, you have spoken strongly in favour of the Imperial War Museum and also of the Centre for Holocaust Education. How have they helped you as a teacher?

Andy Lawrence: They have helped me in many ways. The CPD that they have provided—I have just been on a residential week with them—has simply been the best CPD I have ever had as a teacher. They provide support when I am back in the classroom. They provide support in terms of setting a methodological model for how I can deliver the lessons, which would probably be the most impactful lessons I teach in a year. They also provide a model for how it has worked very successfully in other schools, such as down at Royal Wootton Bassett and Thomas Hardy school and Hermitage up in Durham and so on. For every stage they provide a model to deliver successful and impactful lessons in the classroom.

Chair: I want to thank you all very much indeed for contributing to this inquiry and answering our questions—sometimes in great detail and sometimes with a huge amount of emotion and intellectual strength. We will be publishing a report in due course and, of course, we will have the National Holocaust Day in mind when we do that. Thank you all very much indeed. If there is anything else you think we need to know and which we don't know, or we might not know, let us know.