



FASPE

Fellowships at  
Auschwitz  
for the Study of  
Professional Ethics

2018 JOURNAL











## 2018 JOURNAL

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# ABOUT FASPE

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Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics (FASPE) is a program that challenges young professionals to develop as ethical and responsible leaders. In a modern civil society, professionals play a critical role in shaping public discourse and in influencing actions in both the private and public sectors. FASPE impresses upon its Fellows the importance of their roles as professionals.

FASPE Fellows begin their examination of professional ethics by studying professionals in Nazi Germany, recognizing that it was their failure to act ethically and assert ethical leadership that enabled the devastating policies of National Socialism. Against this historical backdrop, Fellows then consider the ethical issues currently facing professionals in their respective fields, including how to identify, analyze, and respond to them.

Professionals designed, executed, and enabled Nazi policies. Lawyers drafted the Nuremberg Laws. Doctors conducted the first gassings of the handicapped. Business executives used slave labor and produced the tools of genocide. Journalists became propagandists. Pastors and priests promoted or condoned racist policies.

Studying these perpetrators powerfully conveys the influence that professionals wield, creates a compelling context for discussing the ethical issues that Fellows will face in their careers, and underscores the urgency for ethical leadership today. Through its use of the power of place and its focus on the professionals as perpetrators, FASPE has created a unique means for studying contemporary professional ethics—and simultaneously has contributed an important and creative approach to Holocaust education.

## OUR FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMS

FASPE currently conducts five fellowship programs—in Business, Journalism, Law, Medical, and Seminary—with fellowships offered to graduate students and early-career professionals. Each FASPE Fellowship consists of a fully funded two-week study trip in Europe.

FASPE Fellowships take place in Berlin, Krakow, and Oświęcim, where Fellows visit sites of Nazi history, including the former Nazi concentration camp of Auschwitz. Daily seminars are held at sites where professionals planned and enacted Nazi policies.

Each year, FASPE accepts between 65 and 75 Fellows across the five disciplines from a diverse and competitive pool of international applicants. Each program travels with at least one other program, allowing Fellows to benefit from cross-disciplinary perspectives.

FASPE Fellowships were developed in consultation with leading practitioners, preeminent academic institutions, and noted scholars. FASPE's faculty is drawn from practicing professionals, ethicists and historians.

## OUR FELLOWS

The FASPE experience extends well beyond the two-week fellowship. Fellows build strong bonds during the program that deepen through FASPE's annual reunions, regular regional gatherings, professional networks, and other resources. Fellows also participate in FASPE's programming and governance.

Our Fellows greatly value the FASPE community and draw regularly on their FASPE experiences. FASPE Fellows are better prepared to confront ethical issues at work and beyond as a result of having participated in a fellowship program and through their ongoing contact with FASPE.

FASPE Fellows go on to pursue distinguished careers, enriching FASPE with their experiences and expertise and, most importantly, applying principles of ethical leadership to their work and to their engagement with their communities. Through our Fellows and their influence, FASPE seeks to have a lasting positive impact on contemporary civil society.

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# Introduction

BY DAVID GOLDMAN

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One might think that history does not change. That history is engrained and permanent without acknowledging that we discover new facts, that we have new insights. One might think that what is and is not ethical behavior is black and white. That ethical behavior is objective and apparent. One might think that leadership is obvious. That the leaders know who they are and they lead.

FASPE takes us back to the drawing board. And, each summer, we perform these redrawing exercises with our Fellowship Programs.

In many respects, 2018 was a clarifying year for FASPE. The imperative to understand history, ethics, and leadership became even clearer—and certainly not because life became simpler. The realities of life—public, personal, vocational, political, financial—grow geometrically more difficult each year. Still, 2018 seemed to be a winner of a year. Words on a page cannot give justice to our anxiety around it all, from artificial intelligence to the dangerous and misused elements of nationalism to global attacks on almost every norm that we hold dear. Yikes.

The FASPE mission in response?

- Study the perpetrators. By learning more about why they acted as they did, we learn more about ourselves and our own predilections. FASPE is placing added emphasis on seeking to understand the individual perpetrators in Nazi Germany. We are increasing our historic research on individual behavior as a way to better train the next generation of leaders.
- Identify ethical issues and ask the right questions. It is more important to search for questions than to pretend that there are obvious answers. FASPE challenges our Fellows to ask the questions; and not to be so arrogant as to think that they know the answers. Where do the risks lie in artificial intelligence? What is the source of inaccurate reporting? What is the role of clergy with rapidly diminishing church attendance? How should law and business respond to the unlimited availability of personal data? And more. Asking is more important than pretending to have the answer.

- **Lead.** We often ask ourselves why the Fellows should go to Auschwitz. The response comes from our Fellows: to empower them to act and to lead. We have come to realize just how important ethical leadership is. Yes, we leave Auschwitz with often inconsolable sadness. But, we also leave with an absolute recognition that we can do better. We hope that the FASPE Fellows return to their schools and law firms, churches, beats, hospitals, corner offices, and elsewhere, knowing that they can do better in their professions, with their colleagues (bosses, peers, and juniors), and in their larger communities. Not to prevent another genocide, but in their day to day activities and interactions. They can ask the right questions and seek to act ethically.

FASPE is entering its tenth year in 2019. We are gratified and proud of what we have accomplished. The best evidence of our efforts, though, resides in the work of our Fellows. This Journal includes the written work of some of our 2018 Fellows and of previous Fellows. We hope that these pieces give you a glimpse into our Fellows and their questions around history, ethics, and leadership. We think that you will find the essays interesting.

As always, we are grateful for the support of our many donors. Our fellowship programs are truly unique (a much overused word). We combine the study of the perpetrators with a cross-disciplinary approach to professional ethics and ethical leadership. Thank you for your interest and your assistance.

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*David Goldman is Chair of FASPE and its founder.*





# Seminary Papers

## Introduction

BY JAMES PONET

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The year 2018 marked the first time FASPE Fellows visited the German Resistance Memorial Center in Berlin, a site that documents and presents exhibits on resistance to National Socialism. Although a full-fledged German resistance to Adolf Hitler never developed, there were individuals among groups such as Social Democrats and Communists, university students, civil servants, and pastors in the “Confessing Church,” who did express dissent or make active attempts at resistance. By including the stories of these exceptional persons in the itinerary—even though their impact on the course of history was negligible—FASPE affirms that in times of terror and coerced complicity, acts of human decency and solidarity take on a heroic quality, and that these historical narratives need to be recounted so that future generations may find in them inspiration for their own battles against fear, nihilism, and despair. In the face of human evil, stories of goodness become prayers and sermons, ethical goads, reminders of who we really are or may yet become.

This year, there were 13 Fellows in the Seminary program. Following the program, each of them wrote a paper on a topic related to ethics, history, or theology as it ties into the themes discussed at FASPE. The papers covered an inspiring range of topics and spoke to the many present-day dilemmas and questions religious leaders face. The ones published here represent the breadth of inquiry the Fellows pursued and the many ways in which they chose to apply the lessons of FASPE to their own work and thought.

In her outstanding essay, “Discovering Acts of Meccan Resistance in the *Seerah*,” Sondos Kholaki reports that since her FASPE Fellowship she has begun to study the life narrative of Muhammad, *or seerah*, from a different angle. The accounts of individual Meccans who refused to comply with orders from the city’s leaders to attack and expel Muhammad and his followers now capture her attention. These individuals did not resist because it served their own interests or because they were themselves converts to Islam. Rather, they were committed to justice. Had these individuals not been willing to oppose the violent orders of their leaders, Kholaki writes, Islam might well have died in its infancy. She concludes that their example



should inspire others to stand up against oppression, even if they are not sure whether their actions will make a difference.

What happens when a violent past is not properly addressed, and it continues to bleed its unexamined toxins into the bloodstream of the present? A report released by a grand jury of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in August, 2018, demonstrated how the Catholic Church systematically covered up a spate of sexual abuse perpetrated by its clergy. In a brave and searching essay, Ariell Watson asks “what aberrant form of ethics” those involved in the abuse and its cover-up were following? She then goes on to trace the root causes back to three ways that those involved misconstrued the teachings and mission of the Church. Watson implies, at least to this reader, that the Church must consciously take upon itself the excruciating work of self-re-conception.

Finally, in her paper, “Remembrance and Reconciliation,” Julia Wallace explores Germany’s struggle with truth and memory in the aftermath of World War II. Inspired by the German culture of memorialization and remembrance that has emerged in the past several decades, Julia trains her eyes on a horrific event that took place in Waco, Texas, in 1916. That year, a 17-year-old black man was brutally tortured and lynched, while thousands of white citizens looked on. To this day, this event has not yet been formally incorporated into Waco’s historical memory. Julia concludes her stirring essay with an affirmation of the power and the concomitant pain of memorialization that adequately honors and recognizes the victims.

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***Rabbi James Ponet*** is the Howard M. Holtzmann Jewish Chaplain Emeritus at Yale University and a lecturer at Yale Divinity School. In 2018, he co-led the FASPE Seminary Fellowship Program with Paulist ***Father Steven Bell, C.S.P.***

# Discovering Acts of Meccan Resistance in the *Seerah*

## A Sermon

BY SONDOS KHOLAKI

---

Muslims often talk about the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings upon him) as a change maker of his time and region—uniting disparate Arab tribes, elevating the status of the poor and needy, and returning Arabs to the pure worship of One God. From the *seerah*, or life narrative of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims learn about the early followers of Islam who risked or sacrificed their lives for their faith. Since my recent trip to Germany and Poland to study ethics in the context of World War II, I began to study the *seerah* from a different angle, specifically searching for Meccans who did not share Muhammad's beliefs but still resisted the Quraysh leaders' insistence on condemning and harming their fellow members. The Quraysh was the dominant tribe in Mecca at the time and consisted of several clans. Muhammad was a member of the Quraysh tribe, as were many of his early followers. The Meccan resisters, both within and outside the Quraysh, did not resist because they benefited in some way; they did not convert to Islam or even necessarily agree with the Prophet's beliefs. Rather, they were individuals who acknowledged the existence of injustice and oppression and decided to resist out of a general commitment to honor.

In Berlin this past summer, I toured the German Resistance Memorial Center with a group of 12 other Seminary Fellows as part of FASPE. At the Memorial Center, we learned about individuals and groups that made a conscious and brave decision to counter Nazi propaganda by writing pieces criticizing the National Socialist party, hiding or employing Jews, and refusing military service, among other acts of resistance. These acts of resistance were not organized or methodical; there was no united movement toward resistance. These German resisters independently acknowledged the mistreatment of human beings and acted within their center of influence to affect change, no matter how disparate or incremental. Of note, these German resisters did not identify as Jew, Roman, or Sinta; they did not benefit from resisting in any way. They could have turned a blind eye to the situation like the majority of German society, but they chose instead to risk their lives to uphold justice.

While similar examples of resisters prove few within existing *seerah* literature, they do exist. Meccan individuals from various social strata and differing political views worked independently within their circles of influence to counter the mistreatment of Muhammad and his early followers by the powerful Quraysh leaders. The Prophet's uncle, Abu Talib, is one of the first Meccans to defy the Quraysh even though he was not a believer in his nephew's faith. A member of the Muttalib clan of the Quraysh (Muhammad was part of the Banu Hashim clan), Abu Talib was a respected figure among Meccans and, despite fierce backlash, pledged his protection of the Prophet Muhammad when nobody else dared. To emphasize the magnitude of this risk: after Abu Talib's death and later in Muhammad's prophethood, most others turned down Muhammad when he requested protection from Meccans.<sup>1</sup> The Quraysh leaders in Mecca spread terrible rumors about Muhammad, forced the clans to disown anybody who turned to Islam, and infamously threw garbage and refuse on Muhammad as he walked by.<sup>2</sup> Per the Arabian honor code of the time, Abu Talib's protection meant that the Quraysh were prevented from doing worse than this to harm or abuse Muhammad.

At one point, the Quraysh leaders demanded that Abu Talib hand over Muhammad to them, and Abu Talib openly refused. Doing so put the entire Muttalib clan at risk. The Quraysh leaders responded by including the Muttalib clan in a decreed banishment from Mecca, its society, and its protection. The banishment stipulated that no Meccan was to continue contact—for marriage, family ties, trade, or business—with the Banu Hashim or Muttalib clans until Muhammad stopped preaching against the Quraysh idols.<sup>3</sup> The oppressive banishment and boycott of the Banu Hashim and Muttalib clans lasted for three long years, in which many suffered greatly—emotionally, spiritually, and physically.

I found two notable acts of resistance by Meccans within this time period. First, relatives of the banished clans risked their own lives to sneak in food and other items to sustain the Muttalib and Banu Hashim members.<sup>4</sup> Second, although Abu Lahab and Abu Jahal, the initiators of the banishment decree, remained ferocious figures in Mecca, some individuals gathered the courage to stand up for their fellow Hashim and Muttalib members. The boycott situation became so intolerable for the Meccans that many felt uncomfortable morally. In front of a crowd gathered around the Kaaba—a monument that is the focal point of Mecca—one individual commented loudly that the banishment and boycott of their fellow clans was wrong. This courageous individual

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<sup>1</sup> Tariq Ramadan, *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 70.

<sup>2</sup> Ramadan, 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ramadan, 66.

<sup>4</sup> Ramadan, 66.

sparked a conversation among the rest of the crowd in support of lifting the ban. Encouraged by the size of the crowd and its opposition to the boycott, one by one, people joined the outspoken man. Abu Lahab and Abu Jahl tried to silence the crowd but to no avail. Finally, somebody took the written decree and tore it up, and the boycott ended. With the brave initiative of that one man as an example, others felt empowered to speak their dissent, and change occurred.<sup>5</sup>

Another example of resistance in the form of extending protection to the early Muslims occurred when Um Salamah, a woman from an elite clan among the Quraysh, traveled alone with her son to Medina to find her husband and escape persecution. On her journey there, a man named Uthman ibn Talhah, who was not a Muslim, found her and offered to journey with her so that she could benefit from his clan protection. Like Abu Talib, Uthman was aware of the circumstances under which he was offering her escort and the risks he was taking. It is said that Um Salamah proudly retold this story often, praising the young man for his courage.<sup>6</sup>

Yet another principled individual risked his life to protect early Muslims from abuse. Just as the Prophet was making his final migration to Yathrib to escape the Meccan leaders' plan to execute him, a Bedouin named Abdullah ibn Urayqat guided Prophet Muhammad and his traveling companion, Abu Bakr, out of Mecca toward Yathrib with members of the Quraysh fast on their heels.<sup>7</sup> Should the Quraysh members have caught them, all three would have been killed on the spot. Abdullah ibn Urayqat, as well as Uthman ibn Talhah and the crowd gathered at the Kaaba, were polytheists, and they did not personally benefit from protecting Muhammad or his early followers in Mecca. Yet, these small acts of resistance, seemingly insignificant and disconnected, changed the course of history for the Muslim community.

Perhaps one of the most effective acts of resistance against the Quraysh leaders came from the Abyssinian King, called "the Negus," who granted refuge to early Muslims fleeing persecution in Mecca.<sup>8</sup> The Negus was Christian, and while he did not share the early Muslims' religious or cultural background, people knew him for his justice. The Prophet said of the Negus, "If you went to the land of the Abyssinians, you would find there a king under whose command nobody suffers injustice. It is a land of sincerity in religion."<sup>9</sup> Soon after the early Muslims arrived in Abyssinia, the Quraysh sent emissaries to convince the Negus to return the Muslims to Mecca, where they would have certainly been punished for fleeing. The Negus invited both the Quraysh

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<sup>5</sup> Ramadan, 67.

<sup>6</sup> Ramadan, 77.

<sup>7</sup> Ramadan, 83.

<sup>8</sup> Ramadan, 62.

<sup>9</sup> Ramadan, 59.

and the Muslim delegations to make their case, and he exercised his judgment in understanding the situation for what it was. This point remains particularly poignant for those in leadership currently. Under the Negus's protection, early Muslims enjoyed freedom from persecution by the Quraysh in Mecca, and they were able to grow as a community.

A final but noteworthy example of resistance took place not in Mecca, but in the neighboring city of Taif. The *seerah* recounts the famous story of a time when the citizens of Taif drove out Muhammad by chasing him and pelting him with stones and garbage. Muhammad took refuge by hiding in an orchard where he sat under a tree and wept openly to God, a most touching and intimate moment in the Prophet's life. The two orchard owners saw the abuse that had occurred and coordinated with their servant to deliver grapes to Muhammad as he sat under the tree, bleeding and dejected. In some narrations, the orchard owners even had Muhammad's wounds dressed. Knowing the way their fellow citizens felt toward this man, the orchard owners could have pushed Muhammad out of the orchard or turned him into the Taif leadership. Instead, the orchard owners allowed Muhammad to find respite for a moment and even provided him with some sustenance and healing.<sup>10</sup>

These examples of resistance serve to remind us of the impact of resistance, no matter how small, on those caught in oppressive or unjust situations. Similar to the situation in Germany and Poland in World War II, more Arabians shunned and mistreated the Prophet and the early Muslims than resisted the oppressive forces in leadership. I could find only a handful of such resistors recorded in the *seerah*, and we may never know of others whose actions never made it into the narrative. Over and over in these stories, we find that the resistors acted not for personal benefit or even from a shared belief system but out of sympathy or a universal commitment to justice, an action praised and upheld by the Prophet himself, according to Tariq Ramadan, a philosopher and professor of theology and religion at the University of Oxford: "[T]he Prophet clearly acknowledges the validity of adhering to principles of justice and defending the oppressed, regardless of whether those principles come from inside Islam or outside it."<sup>11</sup> The Prophet recognized the Negus for his values. Abu Talib was recognized in the *seerah* for his honor. The individual at the Kaaba, whose name and status remains unknown, is remembered for his courage. Um Salamah memorialized how Uthman ibn Talhah protected her and her child.

When we define ourselves by ethics and values, we transcend the negative pressures around us. When we can no longer define ourselves by our titles or careers or usual

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<sup>10</sup> Ramadan, 69.

<sup>11</sup> Ramadan, 21.



markers, who or what defines us? Culture changes, ideology changes, people change, but universal principles of justice and equality remain timeless. We cannot allow power or social/economic/political interests to blind us from maintaining our principles of respect for God's creation and upholding its dignity. God says clearly in the Qur'an, "... and when you testify, be just, even if [it concerns] a near relative."<sup>12</sup> And in another verse, God states, "O you who have believed, be persistently standing firm for God, witnesses in justice, and do not let the hatred of a people prevent you from being just. Be just; that is nearer to righteousness."<sup>13</sup> I find it notable that God recognizes that our hatred, or, more generally, our emotions and our ego, can distort our reality enough to where we may rationalize injustice toward others. The statement that being just is "nearer to righteousness" implies that being just is not always an easy task; it takes work and training and awareness.

As religious leaders, then, we must constantly reassess our motivations behind saying what we say, preaching what we preach, doing what we do. We, as religious leaders, should own our responsibility for being the first to espouse messages and teachings that honor the worth and value of every human soul and spirit. I learned in studying the events leading up to the Holocaust that genocides do not start with mass murder. They start with words and an ideology. In the *seerah*, the Quraysh leaders set up a system of exclusion and persecution that began with verbal negotiations with the Prophet and his allies, and then rumors that the Prophet was an evil sorcerer, followed by mocking and humiliating verbal assaults;<sup>14</sup> from there, the hatred and fear escalated to manifest itself in physical and violent abuse. Notably, this oppression came from the tribal and ideological leadership of Mecca which acted out of a motivation of hatred, emotion, and ego—all characteristics that God warns us about in the verse mentioned above. The Quraysh leaders play the roles of the "bad guys" in the narrative of the *seerah*, but God's message indicates that we are all susceptible to succumbing to this kind of inclination toward injustice.

Where, in our community, do we see groups struggling with marginalization and dehumanization? When we witness such injustice, we often jump to the conclusion that there is not much we can do. We ask ourselves: "What change can I possibly affect?" However, as we see in the examples of the resisters in Mecca, the point is not *how much* can we help but rather *that we help*, period. The quantity or "how much" we help remains less important than the mere fact of helping, at whatever level, as a daily and embodied ethos. For ultimately, God is the One who may magnify the seemingly smallest of acts depending on our sincerity, or *ikhlas*, an integral concept in

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<sup>12</sup> Qur'an 6:152.

<sup>13</sup> Qur'an 5:8.

<sup>14</sup> Ramadan, 46.

Islam. Conversely, God may lessen the impact of good deeds that appear weighty, based on a doer's intention and motivation. The *hadith*—or saying by the Prophet Muhammad—“Do not belittle even the seemingly slightest of good works,” speaks to this meaning. Something has to shift inside of us for us to own the responsibility to act. To the early Muslims suffering from the boycott of the Muttalib and Banu Hashim clans, it was not about how much food was smuggled in by sympathetic Meccans, it was that there existed a group of individuals who cared. The message was, “We will get through this together.” Hope was sustained. Lastly, consider this: without these “small” acts of resistance, the Quraysh leaders' attempts to snuff out Islam—a religion that now has nearly two billion adherents and has made numerous significant contributions to world thought—may have succeeded. I wonder how many other communities could and should have been saved by individuals willing to resist for the sake of doing what is right.

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***Sondos Kholaki** serves as a chaplain at Hoag Hospital in Irvine, CA. She is also a student in Islamic Chaplaincy at Bayan Claremont at the Claremont School of Theology, from which she will graduate with an MDiv degree in 2019.*

# Aberrant Ethics and the Clerical Sexual Abuse Crisis

## A Reading of a Grand Jury Report

BY ARIELL WATSON

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From 2016 to 2018, a Pennsylvania grand jury, under the leadership of the Pennsylvania attorney general, investigated the history of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy in six Pennsylvania dioceses over a period of seven decades. The grand jury identified over a 1,000 child victims using church records. At the directive of the state supreme court, the grand jury released a redacted version of its findings to the public in August 2018. In its over 600 pages, the report draws from witness accounts and internal diocesan documents to chronicle many stories of sexual abuse perpetrated by priests, as well as attempts within the Catholic Church to cover up the abuse. The report contains a list of the over 300 priests accused of sexual abuse.<sup>1</sup>

In the introduction to its report, the grand jury states among its goals that, “we hope there will also be self-reflection within the church, and a deep commitment to creating a safer environment for its children.”<sup>2</sup> This paper endeavors to engage in that self-reflection, exploring the material documented by the grand jury in order to understand the factors that have led to this widespread abuse and to the ethical violations by leaders in the Roman Catholic Church.

Every Catholic leader named in the report—from priests to bishops to the rare lay minister—had, by virtue of his (or her) position, undergone years of spiritual formation and theological education. All of them were highly-trained professionals, expected to uphold a sacred code of ethics. Yet, as the report details, a large number of these leaders violated this ethical code by committing sexual offenses against minors; and others were complicit in these offenses by willfully ignoring them, covering them up, allowing them to continue, and even directly lying about them. The scope of the investigation in Pennsylvania makes clear that this was not merely the ethical failure of a few bad actors, or something that could be chalked up to causes such as mental

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<sup>1</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup> Statewide Investigating Grand Jury* (Harrisburg, PA: Office of Attorney General, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 2018), 1.

<sup>2</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*.

illness or addiction. The widespread cooperation with evil that occurred in this instance reveals systemic breaches of professional ethics—or, perhaps, adherence to an alternate ethical system. Thus, writing off these stories as exceptional cases within an otherwise moral institution will no longer suffice. The prevalence of these behaviors raises a deeper question: if these were not the atypical acts of a few exceptionally evil men violating their ethical code, then what aberrant form of ethics are these people following? This paper identifies some of these ethical aberrations: a misconstrual of the aims of sexual morality, of the purpose of ordained ministries, and of the mission of the institutional church.

## The Aims of Sexual Morality

Undeniably, the sexual misconduct of priests violated the sexual morality espoused by the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic interpretation of Scripture and magisterial teaching uniformly and unequivocally condemns such acts. The Catechism of the Catholic Church calls rape an “intrinsically evil act” which “causes grave damage that can mark the victim for life.” It elaborates, “Graver still is the rape of children committed by parents (incest) or those responsible for the education of the children entrusted to them.”<sup>3</sup> Surely the actions of these priests, as those entrusted with the formation of children who called them “Father,” fall under this moral injunction. Any sound Catholic moral theology would determine that these offenses are sins. The documents and testimony collected by the grand jury indicate many instances of pedophile priests making confession of these actions, showing that they themselves had the moral clarity to identify them as sinful. The trouble then, in many of these cases, is not in any technical understanding of the boundaries surrounding sexual morality. Instead, the ethical breakdown comes from a misconstrual of the *aims* of Catholic sexual morality. While these offenders identified their behavior as spiritually sinful, they were not able to understand the human consequences of their sins, i.e. they were unable to understand the full impact of their sin, even while they recognized it as sinful. For example, based on its 2017 interview of Edmond Parrakow—a priest in active ministry in New York and the Diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania from the late 1960s through the late 1980s—the grand jury reports:

Parrakow testified that he confessed his crimes to his fellow priests, but admitted he would offend again after he received absolution. During a particular exchange with the attorney for the Commonwealth, Parrakow conceded that he could not be cured of his desires and indicated that he was unaware of the ‘serious effects’ of his criminal actions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 1997), 2356.

<sup>4</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 128.

Parrakow identified his behavior as worthy of confession—in other words, he regarded it as sin. Nonetheless, he could not comprehend the “serious effects” of these sins. If one understands sin primarily as a stain on one’s soul, then absolution can wash the sin away; if one understands it primarily as an offense against God, then a fellow priest acting *in persona Christi* can assure of God’s forgiveness. Based on these understandings of sin, absolution has the power to remove all the consequences of one’s actions. Absolution does not, however, mitigate the temporal consequences of sin: the harm done to oneself, to other people, to communities, or to the environment. Parrakow’s testimony reveals his limited view of sin. He seemed to view it only as a spiritual offense against God, and therefore something for which he could simply confess his offenses against God and receive absolution from their spiritual consequences. Because Parrakow did not grasp that his sins also harmed other people, he failed to perceive that the temporal consequences of his sin continued to mount, despite the fact that he was granted spiritual absolution.

Parrakow’s case exemplifies what occurs when sexual morality becomes overly spiritualized and distanced from its temporal impetus and from its human consequences.

Unfortunately, Parrakow’s myopic view of sin is not exceptional, and was even reinforced by Church leadership. According to the grand jury’s findings, upon being accused of sexual misconduct, Father Michael Lawrence, a priest who retained his clerical status with the Diocese of Allentown from 1973 until his death in 2015, went to Monsignor Anthony Muntone of the chancery of the Diocese of Allentown and said “Please help me. I sexually molested a boy.”<sup>5</sup> Muntone’s report about this incident, developed in consultation with the Catholic treatment center to which Lawrence was referred, concluded that “the experience will not necessarily be a horrendous trauma’ for the victim.”<sup>6</sup> Lawrence’s confession and request for help reveal that he had some sense of the consequences of his actions and that he wanted to address his sin beyond simply receiving absolution. The diocese’s response, however, minimized the temporal consequences of Lawrence’s actions. Its response allowed both priest and diocese alike to imagine that, once the spiritual consequences of the sin were addressed, Lawrence could return to active ministry with minors. By ignoring how sin harms victims, the diocese could rationalize not providing meaningful restitution and failing to aid the victim, and not taking measures to protect future victims.

The sacrament of reconciliation and the theology of sin are wonderful resources of the Catholic faith, which help individuals to understand the spiritual consequences of

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<sup>5</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 51.

<sup>6</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 51.



their actions and to experience forgiveness and grace. Understanding sin as a spiritual phenomenon to the exclusion of recognizing its temporal consequences, however, is a theological distortion. Sadly, this distortion has fostered an aberrant sexual ethic in which those who have committed sexual assault against children, once absolved, are not responsible for any further consequences. Rectifying this problem within the Church will require a reexamination of sexual morality and a reframing to emphasize that sexual propriety is not simply a spiritual goal to preserve one's own holiness; it is also an ethical mandate for the welfare of other human beings and the community.

## Purpose of Ordained Ministries

The behavior of and statements by both priests and bishops, as revealed in the grand jury's report, also show a gross misconception of the purpose of ordained ministries in the Church. Ministry, by definition, exists to serve. Instead of understanding their office as a mandate to care pastorally for the people of God, the priests identified in the grand jury report used their positions to wield power abusively over others. Meanwhile, bishops used their positions to care for priests to the exclusion of caring for the victims, whom they, as shepherds of the local Church, were entrusted with at episcopal ordination.

Victims' accounts show that the priests involved explicitly used their clerical authority to perpetrate abuse. To take just two examples, one victim remembers Father Edward Graff, a priest of the Diocese of Allentown who raped children throughout his 45-year career in schools and parishes,<sup>7</sup> telling him that the abusive behavior was "'OK' because he was 'an instrument of God'"<sup>8</sup>; another victim recalls that Father William Presley, a priest of the Diocese of Erie defrocked in 2006 after two decades of accusations, said his abusive behavior was "okay 'because he was a priest.'"<sup>9</sup> As the grand jury put it, Presley "used his position as a spiritual guide to further the abuse."<sup>10</sup> It is reasonable to conclude that each and every offender priest named in the report did so. This is a vast misuse of the clerical office. The Second Vatican Council's Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests describes a priest's vocation as participating in carrying on the evangelizing work of Jesus Christ by

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<sup>7</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 30.

<sup>8</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 45.

<sup>9</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 87.

<sup>10</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 87.

following his example.<sup>11</sup> Jesus' example of leadership is one of humility and service. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus told his disciples:

You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.<sup>12</sup>

The priests discussed in the grand jury report used their clerical status to rule tyrannically over the children in their communities. Whereas Jesus modelled humility and servant leadership, these priests, ordained to participate in his saving work, manipulated their office to abuse the very people they were commissioned to serve. Sadly, a culture of clericalism within the Catholic Church made this possible by playing into this warped view of priesthood. One victim, identified as Julianne, testified before the grand jury about her experience of the priesthood in Catholicism: "They—there wasn't anybody that was more important than, not just him, but any priest. They were—and to some degree still are, but they are much above anybody else in your family or they are God in the flesh."<sup>13</sup> Christianity teaches that God humbled Godself to become human, in order to serve; Julianne's testimony shows how clericalism inverts this model, inflating priests to a god-like status, which creates conditions under which abuse is more likely to occur. Addressing this ethical crisis within the Catholic Church will require that lay people and clergy alike reexamine the purpose of the priesthood to eliminate clericalism in favor of a model of priesthood which emphasizes service over power.

The grand jury's report makes evident that time and time again, the bishops of Pennsylvania sacrificed pastoral care and protection of the faithful in their dioceses in order to support pedophile priests. This is a distortion of the ministry of bishops. The Second Vatican Council's Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church opens its discussion of diocesan bishops by stating, "A diocese is a portion of the people of God which is entrusted to a bishop to be shepherded by him with the cooperation of the presbytery."<sup>14</sup> Note the group with whose pastoral care the bishop

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<sup>11</sup> Second Vatican Council, "Decree on the Ministry and Life of Priests, *Presbyterorum Ordinis*, 7 December, 1965," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery (New York: Costello, 1975), sec. 2-3.

<sup>12</sup> Mark 10:42-45, New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition.

<sup>13</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 21.

<sup>14</sup> Second Vatican Council, "Decree Concerning the Pastoral Office of Bishops in the Church, *Christus Dominus*, 28 October, 1965," in *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post Conciliar Documents*, edited by Austin Flannery (New York: Costello, 1975), sec. 11.

is entrusted: the people of God in that diocese. Priests configure in the bishop's mission by cooperating in their ministry, *not* by being the primary recipients of that ministry. The grand jury report demonstrates how bishops have reversed this order, acting as if their primary responsibility were to minister to priests, and as if lay people were mere instruments toward that end. The grand jury identified this attitude clearly in its commentary on one bishop's response after an incident in his diocese:

...a priest raped a girl, got her pregnant, and arranged an abortion. The bishop expressed his feelings in a letter: 'This is a very difficult time in your life, and I realize how upset you are. I too share your grief.' But the letter was not for the girl. It was addressed to the rapist.<sup>15</sup>

This bishop directed his pastoral care toward the perpetrator instead of the victim. Like the other bishops discussed in the report, he had a misguided sense that his pastoral attentions were to be directed primarily toward priests, with the lay faithful as an afterthought. This is also borne out in the fact that many offender priests received psychological, spiritual, and financial assistance from their dioceses, whereas few victims received these resources. Because of their misguided sense of duty to priests over and against the faithful, bishops responded to accusations of sexual misconduct by taking the side of clergy. Not only did bishops choose to believe and defend priests over their accusers—as in the case of a student expelled from school after reporting abuse by her teacher<sup>16</sup>—but they repeatedly took measures to smear the reputations of the victims in order to cast doubt on their stories. To take just one of many examples: the grand jury found that “Having received a report that one of their priests had violated children, the Diocese and its attorney immediately began to exchange information meant to discredit the victim with unrelated and irrelevant attacks on her and her family.”<sup>17</sup> These behaviors demonstrate these bishops' twisted view of their role as protecting and caring for priests, which in these cases runs counter to their mandate from the Church to care for *all* members of their dioceses. Like priests who view their office as one designed for power instead of service, bishops who view their responsibility as being to priests rather than to the faithful operate by an aberrant ethical code. This code departs from the normative ethics laid out by Catholic teaching and opens up bishops to perpetuating the abuses reported by the grand jury.

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<sup>15</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 6.

<sup>16</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 22.

<sup>17</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 25.

## Mission of the Institutional Church

The grand jury's report also shows how a distorted understanding of the Church's mission has given way to aberrant ethics. Instead of seeing its primary aim as working toward the Kingdom of God on earth, Church leaders have functioned as if the Church's mission were one of self-preservation. Consequently, they have prioritized avoiding scandal and maintaining the status quo over the protection of vulnerable people.

The grand jury's report states that, during the period in question, the main aim of the Catholic dioceses in Pennsylvania, "was not to help children, but to avoid 'scandal.'"<sup>18</sup> Toward that end, leaders minimized and denied the real problem of pedophilia by using euphemisms in their reports on these incidents,<sup>19</sup> attributing them to more socially-acceptable problems like alcoholism,<sup>20</sup> hiding documents from even the Church's own internal investigators,<sup>21</sup> and directly lying about the issue to the media.<sup>22</sup> The decisions Catholic leaders made over decades show that they believed that publicly acknowledging wrongdoing was worse than allowing it to continue. These behaviors reveal an ethical framework in which the Church's mission is self-perpetuation, rendering scandal the ultimate evil.

The Catholic Church's efforts to protect the status quo have also included maximizing the number of ordained priests in order to provide priestly services to as many of the faithful as possible. The shortage of priests in the United States, which grew during the period investigated by the grand jury, puts significant pressure on bishops to ordain candidates and to keep priests in active ministry. This may partially explain—though never justify—why bishops continually reassigned unfit priests, resisted their laicization, and even ordained them in the first place. In its self-reflection in the wake of the grand jury's report, the Catholic Church must address this issue by reexamining its dependence upon clergy. The victimization of children is too high a price to pay to have a priest in each parish. Genuinely addressing the problem of sexual abuse in the Church may well mean a dip in the priestly ranks. Catholics must resolve to make this sacrifice for the protection of their children. Scripture warns "Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."<sup>23</sup> The Church would do well to heed

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<sup>18</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 2.

<sup>19</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 3.

<sup>20</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 169.

<sup>22</sup> Pennsylvania Statewide Investigating Grand Jury, *Report I of the 40<sup>th</sup>*, 111.

<sup>23</sup> James 3:1.

this warning as an exhortation toward a leaner priesthood, but one which can meet the high standards to which leaders must be held.

Jesus stated that his mission was “to bring good news to the poor ... to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”<sup>24</sup> In order to participate in this mission, the Church must prioritize liberating people from oppression and suffering, paying particular attention to the vulnerable, including children. In their misconstrual of the church’s mission as self-preservation, some Catholic leaders have lost sight of this gospel mission to such an extent that they have become agents of harm to the very people they have been charged with healing.

## Conclusion

The prevalence of misconduct and criminal behavior on the part of its ministers, as detailed in the Pennsylvania grand jury report, points to an aberrant ethic operating within the Roman Catholic Church. Characterized by the spiritualization of sexual morality, the distortion of the purpose of ministerial offices, and a misconstrual of the Church’s mission, this ethic has created the conditions under which countless children have been abused and silenced. The work of building a safer church must begin with anchoring ethics in re-centered theologies of sin, ministry, and Church.

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<sup>24</sup> Luke 4:18-19.



# Remembrance and Reconciliation

BY JULIA WALLACE

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In the decades directly following World War II Germany faced a complex challenge: deciding whether or not, and how, to remember victims of the war and the atrocities perpetrated by the Nazi state. Immediately after the war ended questions emerged on whether to destroy or preserve sites that marked Nazi terror, and whether to forget or to remember. The complexity of this question was compounded by further considerations, such as whose perspective should be represented if public memorialization were to occur. This collective post-war struggle to remember—honestly and publicly—Germany's history revealed a potent truth: that there is a politics to memory.

Although Germany lends itself as a case study of the politics of memory in post-conflict societies, such complexities are not unique to Germany. Most post-conflict societies, including the United States with its history of racial discrimination and violence, face similar challenges: Should we remember past atrocities? If so, how? How do we reconcile the differing narratives that may emerge? Is it possible to present a faithful—or unified—account of past events when historical accounts emerge phenomenologically in the subjective experience of individuals and groups? While a simple response to these questions may not exist, one can look to the German experience post-WWII to better understand the complexity of memory as well as the need for public remembrance.

## The Politics of Memory in Germany After World War II

After the war ended German society had to decide what to do with the physical remains of the Nazi regime—those buildings and sites built or used by the Nazis that still stood after the regime fell—as well as what to do with the vacant spaces that the victims once filled. The question of memorialization became two-fold: What should be torn down and what should be built up? Should concentration camps remain standing as a reminder of the atrocities perpetrated by the state, or should that symbol of dehumanization, torture, and death be destroyed? Should monuments be erected to remember the lives that were taken during the Holocaust? If so, how do you

remember in a way that is sensitive and beneficial to survivors and their families while also taking into account social cohesion?

The balance between collectively remembering and collectively forgetting is one that, as professor and critic Ann Rigney writes, is “fraught with more moral, emotive, and political difficulties than the optimistic belief in a clean transition might suggest.”<sup>1</sup> Given the usually twin, but not necessarily coinciding, goals of attempting to offer recognition or even healing to the victims (or their surviving kin) while preserving social cohesion, societies emerging from conflict try to find a balance between which past events they acknowledge in the present and which they relegate to the past. Public memorialization can be a double-edged sword in its ability to both mend broken relationships through communal acknowledgment and remembrance, or further solidify divisions by eternalizing the memory of abuse and division.<sup>2</sup>

For the first few decades after the war most of German society chose collective amnesia. Most Germans remained silent and sought to forget the events that took place between 1933 and 1945. Between 1945 and 1960, most memorials erected in Germany were initiated by survivors or relatives of victims, with little to no initiation by the state.<sup>3</sup> However, state voices supporting efforts at memorialization did eventually emerge to remember German soldiers and civilian victims in what scholar Jenny Wüstenburg describes as a “dominant narrative whereby everyone had suffered under Hitler and, apart from a few bad apples, all were to be honored for having served the fatherland.”<sup>4</sup> Through both *forgetting* and *selectively remembering*, the German state began to distort the narrative surrounding Germany’s role in the war and in the Holocaust against the Jews.

## ‘Dig Where You Stand’: Grassroots Movements

While this distorted narrative took hold in the initial decades following WW II in parts of the German psyche, a significant shift in public memorialization emerged in the 1980s and 1990s. Influenced largely by persons such as Sven Lindqvist—whose book *Dig Where You Stand: How to Do Research on a Job* advocated for grassroots investigation into the history of industries—German citizens began their own efforts at “memory activism.”<sup>5</sup> Struck by Lindqvist’s assertion that the powerful control historical narratives and transmit them with biased partiality, many Germans were

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<sup>1</sup> Ann Rigney, “Reconciliation and Remembering: (How) Does it Work?” *Memory Studies* 5 (3) (2012): 253.

<sup>2</sup> Rigney, “Reconciliation,” 252.

<sup>3</sup> Jenny Wüstenburg, *Civil Society in Postwar Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 32.

<sup>4</sup> Wüstenburg, 33.

<sup>5</sup> Wüstenburg, 5.

inspired to follow his call for ordinary workers to bring a new and balancing perspective to the table. As a result, ordinary citizens began to lead grassroots efforts to commemorate the murdered victims of the Nazi state leading to the erection of more memorials and plaques during the 1980s than were erected in the entire period between 1933 and 1980.<sup>6</sup>

One of the most notable examples of this social action occurred on May 5, 1985. On that date, a group of citizens gathered at a vacant lot in the middle of West Berlin with shovels. Forty years prior this spot had been the headquarters of the Gestapo, but by 1985 it had become a vacant and overgrown lot. These activists—who adopted the phrase “dig where you stand”—began to symbolically and literally dig up the past.<sup>7</sup> Today the Topography of Terror Documentation Center, one of Berlin’s most visited museums, stands on this spot.

These grassroots movements not only demanded that Germans actively and publicly engage with the past, but they worked to ensure that public memory reflected historical truth. Although these activists were primarily from the side of the perpetrators, they sought to discover and elevate the narratives of the victims. These new narratives that emerged contextualized and challenged the centralized, state-sanctioned narratives from previous decades, and for the first time “perpetrators, sites of crimes, and the range of Nazism’s victims were explicitly named and commemorated.”<sup>8</sup>

Although memory and memorialization can still stir up controversy in Germany, the decades since the 1980s have given rise to a new culture of memorializing the Holocaust and the atrocities committed under the Nazis. Where once a distorted narrative or silence predominated, a new and complex narrative has emerged which reflects with much greater accuracy the history of a people who elected Hitler and participated, either directly or indirectly, in the murder of nearly 6 million Jews. While this revision of the narrative to include the victims and their experiences has led to painful remembrances, it has opened up a process for continual renewal and engagement with Germany’s past. Despite the pain, Germans have recognized that telling the *whole* story gives recognition to the victims and their stories and serves as a step toward Germany’s own social healing. Moreover, they have recognized the function of public remembrance to serve as a warning of one’s own capacity for evil.

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<sup>6</sup> Wüstenberg, 63.

<sup>7</sup> Wüstenberg, 1.

<sup>8</sup> Wüstenberg, 3.

## The ‘Waco Horror’

Many Americans miss the irony of condemning Nazi Germany while ignoring their own history of racial violence and terror. Between 1889 and 1918, the United States experienced 3,224 lynchings. This amounted to one lynching every three days. Of those lynched during this period, 80 percent were black.<sup>9</sup> Justifications for lynching ranged from punitive justice to proactive self-defense “against the Negro criminal as a race.”<sup>10</sup> A minority of white Americans did publicly denounce lynchings—some because of its role in racial terror, many out of concern for the preservation of law and order—but through the mid-1900s lynching was still considered acceptable throughout the United States. Although public opinion evolved slowly, one particularly brutal incident brought lynchings to the forefront of public discourse and galvanized efforts to outlaw the practice.

On May 15, 1916, 17-year old Jesse Washington was savagely tortured and lynched in Waco, Texas. At the time Waco was a “city reputed to be an enlightened, respectable, middle-class community,” writes James SoRelle, professor of history at Baylor University.<sup>11</sup> With its 63 churches and the Baptist-affiliated Baylor (the oldest university in Texas), Waco had gained nicknames such as the “Wonder City,” the “Athens of Texas,” and the “City with a Soul.”<sup>12</sup> Yet comingled with this religiosity and education was a deep-seated racial animosity, exhibited in its racial segregation and violence. Like Germany in the 1930s and 1940s, the lynching of Jesse Washington in Waco exposed the sobering reality that—as writer and theologian Richard Rubenstein said of the Holocaust—“it is an error to imagine that civilization and savage cruelty are antithesis.”<sup>13</sup>

The events leading up to the lynching of Washington began on May 8, 1916, when 53-year-old Lucy Fryer was found murdered on her farm in Robinson, Texas. Suspicions fell almost immediately onto Washington, a 17-year-old black farm hand who had been hired a few months prior. Washington was arrested and taken to the Waco jail before being quickly transferred to Hillsboro and then to Dallas to avoid mob violence. This relocation was prudent; that evening around 500 citizens showed up at the Waco jail demanding Washington, unaware that he had been relocated.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> James M. SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror’: The Lynching of Jesse Washington,” *The Southwestern Historical Quarterly* 86 (4) (April 1983): 517.

<sup>10</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 517.

<sup>11</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 519.

<sup>12</sup> Patricia Bernstein, *The First Waco Horror: The Lynching of Jesse Washington and the Rise of the NAACP* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2005), 11-12.

<sup>13</sup> Cited in Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 9.

<sup>14</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 521.

The following Monday, on May 15, 1916, Washington was brought back to Waco for trial. Although debate still surrounds his innocence, Washington pled guilty to rape and murder in front of a packed courtroom. After deliberating for only four minutes the jury returned a guilty verdict. As the judge was recording the verdict—which warranted the death penalty—chaos erupted and an unidentified white spectator, using a racial epithet, yelled to “get” Washington.<sup>15</sup> A group grabbed Washington and took him down the back stairs of the courthouse, where approximately 400 people waited in an alley.

Once outside they threw a chain around Washington’s neck and dragged him toward city hall. Along the short route Washington was stabbed with knives and battered with fists, bricks, clubs, and shovels.<sup>16</sup> By the time they arrived outside of city hall—where a group had been waiting and preparing a bonfire—Washington was semiconscious and bleeding profusely. The group doused his body with coal oil, hung him up on a tree by the chain around his neck, cut off his fingers, ears, and toes, and then lit the combustibles that had been piled underneath him. His body was then raised and lowered into the flames while 15,000 people—approximately half of Waco’s population at the time—stood and watched, and law enforcement did nothing to intervene.<sup>17</sup>

## Responses to the Lynching

The response of the local white population to the lynching varied from shame to indifference to a sense of self-righteous approval. Although there was some public condemnation—including from a special committee of Baylor faculty—denunciations were few and far between. And of those that did publicly denounce the event, many focused on the excessive cruelty or the external reproach this event would bring upon Waco rather than on the lynching itself.<sup>18</sup>

The local black response was generally one of public regret and condemnation for Washington’s purported crime, yet geographic proximity and fear limited authentic and open responses to the lynching on the part of blacks. Elizabeth Freeman, the NAACP reporter assigned to investigate this case, described a feeling among black Wacoans that “while they had one rotten member of their race the whites had

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<sup>15</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 526.

<sup>16</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 526.

<sup>17</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 528.

<sup>18</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 530.

15,000.”<sup>19</sup> Through Freeman’s reporting we also know that there was great disappointment among local blacks that white clergy in Waco had not been more outspoken on the brutal and extralegal killing of Washington. A week after the event, Freeman reported that, “So far I have not found a Christian minister who has protested against the action of the Waco folk.”<sup>20</sup>

On the national level this event sparked significant debate and backlash. It was one of the few lynchings documented while it occurred, and graphic images of the lynching emerged and spread across America.<sup>21</sup> The NAACP—which had already identified lynching as one of the most pressing barriers for racial advancement—saw this incident as a cause célèbre which could help galvanize their national anti-lynching efforts.<sup>22</sup>

## Remembering (Forgetting?) the ‘Waco Horror’

Today no marker or monument exists in Waco to commemorate Washington or to remember Waco’s history of lynchings. Over time, the story of Washington’s lynching has been repressed or forgotten altogether in the city’s collective consciousness. Local history books did not even mention the event until the late 1960s.<sup>23</sup>

Local public attention to the “Waco Horror” was renewed in 1998 when Waco Councilman Lawrence Johnson—who heard about the lynching for the first time during a visit to the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis—chose to read the story aloud at the swearing-in for his next term. Johnson also called for a formal condemnation of the event by the City of Waco and for the erection of a monument or memorial to remember the event; neither occurred.<sup>24</sup>

In 2002, public attention was drawn yet again to Washington and Waco’s history of lynchings when an image of a hanging tree was discovered in a painting in the lobby of the McLennan County Courthouse, which is located in Waco, the county seat. The image—which shows a noose hanging over a tree between the Courthouse and City Hall—was discovered during the renovation of the 16-panel mural depicting Waco’s

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<sup>19</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 530.

<sup>20</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 529.

<sup>21</sup> Local photographer Fred A. Gildersleeve, who was given advance notice of the lynching, took pictures from a window inside city hall. Many of these pictures were later sold as postcards. (SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 527).

<sup>22</sup> SoRelle, “The ‘Waco Horror,’” 518.

<sup>23</sup> J.B. Smith, “‘Waco Horror’ at 100: Why Jesse Washington’s Lynching Still Matters,” *Waco Tribune-Herald*, May 15, 2016.

<sup>24</sup> Smith, “‘Waco Horror’ at 100.”

history. While some defended the image as a harmless reminder of what they called Waco's "Wild West" past, black citizens were vocal in denouncing it as a symbol of racial terror and violence. After the discovery of the painting, County Commissioner Lester Gibson, who is African-American, introduced a resolution before the Commissioners Court, which condemned the history of lynching in McLennan County. Gibson indicated his desire to place the resolution on a plaque next to the mural in order to keep the memory of this dark chapter in Waco's history alive and to symbolize the city's current communal condemnation of its lynching past.<sup>25</sup> The proposition was met with silence. Since no second motion was made, the resolution did not pass that year.

Gibson continued to pursue the resolution, however, and was finally able to get it passed in 2006. It took another five years, until 2011, for Gibson to get approval to have the one-page resolution put on display next to the mural in the courthouse. Although it condemns lynching, the resolution does not mention any victims by name. Progress toward honoring Washington by name was finally made in May 2016—the centennial anniversary of Washington's lynching—when the Mayor and City Council issued a proclamation reiterating the 2006 resolution and explicitly denouncing the "heinous lynching of Jesse Washington."<sup>26</sup>

Prior to the anniversary of Washington's lynching, a planning committee had also approached the McLennan County Historical Commission about submitting an application to the state to place a historical marker somewhere in Waco as a symbol "that this is our dedication as a community to acknowledge our past and commit to never letting this happen again."<sup>27</sup> While these plans did not materialize in time for the centennial, the Texas Historical Commission approved the application in July of 2016. However, no marker has yet appeared anywhere in Waco.

## A Call to Remember

Memory matters. The narratives we tell about the past are sedimented in the present and they affect our future. On a collective scale that is why public acts of remembrance matter. As Rigney writes, they are "as much about shaping the future as about recollecting the past."<sup>28</sup> But simply remembering does not suffice to fully recognize the suffering of the victim nor bring social healing. The remembering may

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<sup>25</sup>Armando Villafranca. "Controversy Born Over Courthouse Mural," *Houston Chronicle*. June 30, 2002.

<sup>26</sup>Smith, "Waco Horror' at 100."

<sup>27</sup> Kristin Hoppa, "County Historical Group Supports Marker Commemorating Jesse Washington Lynching," *Waco Tribune-Herald*, February 11, 2016.

<sup>28</sup> Rigney, "Reconciliation," 251.

be selective, and selective memory may be as detrimental, if not more so, than collective forgetting. In order to engage the truth in history we must be willing to engage with the whole story, which requires extending a platform to the voices of those who were victimized and silenced. In Germany, it meant hearing the stories of Jews; in the United States, it means listening to the voices and stories of African-Americans and other minorities; and in Waco, it means engaging with a painful past of lynching and racial terror, including the lynching of Jesse Washington. By *fully* remembering and memorializing the events of the past, we allow for the start of healing, we strengthen social bonds of connection, and we remind ourselves of our own insidious and continued capacity for evil.

As the poet Maya Angelou wrote in her poem, “On the Pulse of Morning,” which she recited at the first inauguration of President Bill Clinton:

*History, despite its wrenching pain,  
Cannot be unlived, but if faced  
With courage, need not be lived again.*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Angelou, Maya, *On the Pulse of Morning* (New York: Random House, 1993).