



Defiance and Protest
Forgotten Acts of Individual Jewish Resistance in Nazi Germany
with Wolf Gruner
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Speaker: Wolf Gruner

Transcribed by: Carla Altomare and Stephanie Duncan

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Defiance and Protest: Forgotten Acts of Individual Jewish Resistance in Nazi Germany (2019)
Holocaust Living History Workshop

Time	Transcription	Slideshow Text
0:01	[The Library / UC San Diego]	
0:06	[A Holocaust Living History Event]	
0:06	Susanne Hillman: I would like to welcome you all to today's Holocaust Living History Workshop. I am particularly delighted to acknowledge the sponsor of today's event: Lorraine Ratner, who has been a faithful supporter for years already of our program. Thank you so much, Lorraine. It is really thanks to Lorraine and other sponsors that we can offer this quality programming, and I'm sure seeing so many of you, that this is appreciated. Now it is my pleasure to ask Jörg Neuheiser to come to the podium. Jörg Neuheiser is visiting professor from Germany. He's here for five years thanks to the DAAD [Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst], the German Exchange - Academics Exchange Service. And he is in the department of History and Political Science. So, Jörg, please.	
0:12	[Defiance and Protest: Forgotten Acts of Jewish Individual Resistance in Nazi Germany - <i>with Wolf Gruner</i>]	
1:05	Jörg Neuheiser: Thank you very much and good afternoon everybody. Deborah encouraged me to mention that I'm actually organizing a talk as well which will come up in April 9, and there are flyers outside - it's on fascism's global moment - we have a distinguished speaker from Germany coming over Sven Reichardt, who's an expert on Faschistische Kampfbünde, so special units, SA [Sturmabteilung] and he'll be giving a talk in April, so please check out the date. But, much more important, it's my great pleasure to welcome and introduce our distinguished speaker today: Professor Wolf Gruner. He comes to us from Los Angeles, where he teaches at the University of Southern California. He holds the Shapell-	

Guerin Chair in Jewish History there. He's also the founding director of the USC Shoah Foundation Center for Advanced Genocide Research. Now for something more than 20 years now, he has been an important voice in Holocaust Studies, in German Jewish History and more generally I would say in the global history of mass violence and in comparative genocide research. There's really no way I could list all the publications, all the books that he's brought out over these two decades. And I really only want to mention two things about his impressive body of work here.

- 2:33 Jörg Neuheiser: First, while he has published widely on the Holocaust, particularly on forced labor and the persecution of Jews by the Nazi Regime, it is perhaps less known that he is also an expert on Latin America. He has done important research on the discrimination and racial persecution of the indigenous population in Bolivia. I think two years ago a book was published called *Parias de la Patria*, and the translation - it was published in Spanish - and the English translation of the subtitle would be *The Myth of the Liberation of the Indigenous People in the Republic of Bolivia*. Now second, I would like to mention his latest book, on the persecution of Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. It was published in 2016, in German and has won several prizes. One was the quite prestigious Sybil Halpern Milton Memorial Book Prize, a prize that's awarded by the German Studies Association. It was awarded for the best book in Holocaust Studies in 2015 and 2016, two years ago.
- 3:42 Jörg Neuheiser: And the other prize might be even more important from our perspective because it's going to provide the means for a speedy translation of this book into English. And that's the translation prize by the German Booksellers Foundation called, Geisteswissenschaften International - Humanities International. Now, thanks to this prize, we can all look forward to the English edition and the subtitle of this

English edition - *Local Initiatives, Central Decisions, Jewish Responses*, tells us a little bit about Professor Gruner's current research, and also about his talk today because he's staying pretty close to this topic. Wolf Gruner shows in his book that the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia of course - the protectorate was founded right after the annexation of Czechoslovakia by the - by Nazi Germany in March 1939. That this protectorate was a central place for radicalization of anti-Jewish policies really all over Germany, right at the beginning of World War II. And it was also a place in which the corroboration between the new German occupation administration and the existing local Czech authorities proved particularly terrible for the local Jews.

- 5:05 Jörg Neuheiser: So the book focuses on the complex dynamics between local anti-Jewish initiatives and the kind of central antisemitic policies emanating from Berlin, and it also provides a detailed look at local Jewish responses to persecution. So in this book, Professor Gruner already deals with the largely forgotten acts of individual defiance, opposition, and resistance by Jews - something that he is currently analyzing in much greater depth, and of course, that's also our topic today. So please join me in welcoming Wolf Gruner, we're excited that you're here Wolf, and very much looking forward to your talk. Thank you very much.
- 5:54 Wolf Gruner: Thank you so much, first of all for - to all of you that you are here in big numbers, I'm very much overwhelmed by this. I have two - maybe bad news and good news. The good news is the book translation is actually finished and the bad news is I'm so exhausted from this that I'm kind of - I hope I survive. Yeah so, as the introduction already said, it's kind of one of my trajectory which came from, started with Jewish forced labor and looking at German institutions, I'm now kind of working on the individual Jewish responses. And it's kind of a little bit reverse because the book on the protectorate is

actually not the starting point, it is practically one of the endpoints of my research, which took now ten years. Exactly I started this just before I moved to USC [University of Southern California]. And in the book, I kind of included for the first time subchapters on individual Jewish resistance, but what I want to present here is the larger scheme of it. However, what I'm actually doing is the next book will not be an academic book - what I'm currently writing is a book for the broader public. So what I do here, I present you a lot of kind of a more spectrum, the book will be much more focused where I will tell the life stories of six people who undertook different kinds of resistance and some of them are mentioned in my talk today, but where I take the act of resistance - what I define as resistance - and then kind of unveil where these individuals came from and also kind of how their life ended in a way.

7:44 Wolf Gruner: And just kind of told in a way where I mix - which is unusual and probably very dangerous - but I just had to do this where I mix actually fiction and non-fiction because - which is clearly marked by the way so everyone will know what is fiction and what's not - but what I tried to do really to get into the senses and the thoughts of the people who are acting as - so maybe this is a thing to look forward to. Today I want to talk about how I came to this topic and what I think we have to reassess when we think about Jewish resistance.

8:24 Wolf Gruner: So let me begin with one story. As I mentioned, just before I moved to USC, I was in a German archive and I came across a story which I haven't found in more than 20 years of Holocaust research. The story occurred in the capital of the Third Reich in 1941, that means several months before the mass deportation started. Hata Reiss was a 36-year-old Jewish woman, she was toiling as a forced laborer at the time. Somewhat earlier she had been ordered to move from her original apartment, rental apartment, with her mother and her son, to a new sublet room - so she had to kind of shrink her

space to a very small space in another apartment. And now at the moment in time, I found this document: she was ordered by a judge to actually leave this home, too. So, in front of the Berlin courthouse - this happened in the capital of the Third Reich - in front of the Berlin courthouse, she said, quote, "We lost everything. Because of the damn government, we finally lost our home too. This thug Hitler, the damn government, the damn people, just because we are Jews we are discriminated against." End of quote.

- 9:45 Wolf Gruner: This struck me because if you think about this, eight years after the Nazis took power, that some Jewish woman in the capital of the Third Reich had the courage to kind of speak up in this way. It's really amazing and challenging our widespread belief that most Jews would kind of passively suffer through the persecution, right? This kind of changes our perspective and asks really to reassess Jewish reactions towards Nazi persecution. What I want to do in my presentation is first briefly discuss why we didn't look at this as resistance, and then I want to give you kind of an overview how these individual acts unfolded, how they changed, and what they reacted to.
- 10:35 Wolf Gruner: So first, on the state of research as I can describe it. So, most researchers today - most scholars, still subscribe to the idea that Jews in general, but specifically German Jews, did not really resist the terrors of the Third Reich. The traditional perception is more about their passive suffering and this has been nourished by the fact that historians have discussed Jewish resistance during the Holocaust mostly in terms of organized resistance on the one hand or armed resistance on the other hand. However there was - let's say moreover - there was even a kind of criticized general lack of resistance by persons like Raul Hilberg in the 1960s, Hannah Arendt, and Bruno Bettelheim. While this was immediately disputed and challenged by Israeli scholars,

nevertheless the general discussion among historians kind of settled on the fact: when we think about resistance, it's always the East - Poland occupied the Soviet Union and that's always kind of partisans, uprisings, but never really big on individual resistance.

11:47 Wolf Gruner: And this kind of is an outcome materialized even in books which are very well received - like from Saul Friedländer - who tries to raise Jewish voices but he never really systematically looked into these kinds of individual acts of defiance. So, what I think is what we really have to kind of change is to evaluate individual Jewish defiance as a missing element of the Holocaust narrative. And I think the reason why we didn't do this before is for two reasons, and I include myself here, yeah, this is not a critique of others, I didn't do this for twenty years either. So, one is we had, I think in my view, a flawed conceptual approach. And the second one is we didn't have the sources. And let me elaborate a little bit more on this. So what I try to do is not really original. I actually just revive old conceptual frameworks. For example, from the Israeli scholar Meir Dworzecki, who already in this 1950s talked about other kinds of resistance like spiritual resistance, cultural resistance, called Amidah - to stand up. And then in the 1970s, the Australian historian Conrad Creed and the East German survivor, Helmut Eschwege. The All three, Dworzecki, Eschwege, Creed, tried to include in the individual responses, individual resistance and tried to up the definition of general resistance to include these acts.

13:30 Wolf Gruner: So, that's what I tried to do here, and then there's another discussion which is often in Holocaust studies not mentioned, in the 1980s there was a general discussion in Germany about resistance. And in the 1980s scholars tried to also change this picture of the only acts of resistance are the assassination attempts against Hitler, but that there is much

more than this, like, nonconformism, defiance, and public protest. So coming from there, I tried to redefine resistance.

14:05 Wolf Gruner: And I'm also - I just did one very simple thing, I used a very common definition from Yehuda Bauer and just added one word: individual. So, when we kind of change our perspective with this new definition then suddenly, everything seems different. And I want to illustrate this. So, when we look at this picture, this is one of the most kind of well-known pictures which normally is used in works on the Holocaust to illustrate the first wave of terror against Jews in 1933. So this is a famous Jewish lawyer in Munich, Michael Seigel, who was dragged by stormtroopers through the city center. When you look kind of under the new lens: why is he dragged? It is not a random act of violence, it is a deliberate act of violence because the poster says, or the sign says, "I won't complain at the police anymore." So he tried actually to get out a client of his who was arrested by the police. So this is clearly changing the picture here.

New Definition - Jewish Resistance is any individual or group action in opposition to known laws, actions, or intentions of the Nazis and their helpers.

15:23 Wolf Gruner: Or, look at this picture. This is one of my favorite pictures so far. This is a Jewish woman, Lizi Rosenfeld, who is sitting on a bench, and for those who can read German and for those who can't, I can translate, the bench says, "only for Aryans." But she is a Jewish woman. So what is she doing there, and how is she sitting there? Look at her body language. This is, I mean, in itself, this photograph actually documenting I think three - at least two acts of resistance. One is she is ignoring kind of general anti-Jewish measures not to sit on this bench, and then she lets somebody take a picture of it to document this act. And then the third one actually is she smuggled out a negative and it ends up in the Holocaust Museum where this today is part of the collection of this family. So, what I try to do is not only to collect unknown acts of individual defiance or protest, what I try to do is really to look into what were the Jews actually reacting to. And this is

only possible today because the last twenty years yield a lot of more details of the complicated nature of anti-Jewish persecution.

- 16:49 Wolf Gruner: Part of my work is connected to this. I worked a lot on municipalities and how they kind of are creating initiative, sometimes of - far ahead of national policy. So, to know so much about the rich - the complicated, diverse, and often contradictory policies on all these different levels enables us now to really look into what Jews were actually reacting to. Yeah, because we know so much more than just kind of the Nuremberg Race Laws. So then, the next problem that I mentioned was sources. Previously, most historians, when they looked at Jewish attitudes, had two sets, two main sets of sources. One was German Administrative Serial Reports, either by the SS [Schutzstaffel], by the Gestapo, sometimes from mayors. The second set were diaries and memoirs. Interestingly, most of the acts I'm looking at, never really surface in these reports. And for the Nazis, there is one obvious reason, they didn't want to document individual resistance, right? And for the legal documents of Jews themselves, the problem is they had also this framework of resistance is only armed and organized, and when I'm doing stuff on my own, this is not, this is nothing heroic, this is nothing. So they neglected their own actions often.
- 18:19 Wolf Gruner: So, what I tried to do now is to really look into, more into sources nobody has looked at. And I used police diaries which survived in Berlin Archives from Berlin Police Precincts. And this is where I found this first story because I was going there to look at traces of the persecution of the Jews. So I went through all these kind of entries of regular policemen in their handwritings, where they talked about stolen bicycles, exhibitionists, drunken people that got arrested, and then suddenly it hit me with the story about the arrest of Jews who protested in public against the persecution.

Going from there I thought, they were named political incidents, so I thought, hmm, that's interesting, how can I get ahold of more information because these entries were very small - it's not even half a page. I have a name and I kind of a description of what happened but nothing more. I don't know the profession, I don't know what happened to them. So I went to court records and there are special courts which kind of were established after 1933 to persecute political opponents. And we always thought this is just for Communists and Social Democrats, so when I looked at these records suddenly I found all these cases of Jews kind of complaining, protesting in public, and they get arrested and they are tried in these special courts. Unfortunately, I didn't find any of the names of the police diaries, however, I found dozens and dozens of other cases.

20:02 Wolf Gruner: So, I think this is, one of the source bases - is practically these police records and the court records, and then I thought maybe this is very specific for Berlin because Berlin is a big city, it's more anonymous so maybe people acted out more easily than in smaller villages or other towns. So what I did then is I did kind of a micro-comparative microstudy: I went to archives in Hamburg, Munich, all the bigger cities, and also some state archives, and compared and looked - can I find comparable sources? And I did. I found tons of acts of public protest, but even more than just public protest, I found a whole range of defiant acts of individual Jews documented in these sources. Plus, the last step was - and this was kind of enabled when I came here - I added a thorough evaluation of 170 interviews of the USC Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive. And they suddenly confirmed some of the stuff I found in the archives but they added also new perspectives which I couldn't find in the archives, which didn't leave traces.

- 21:23 Wolf Gruner: So let me now come to an overview about how Jews responded to persecution in Nazi Germany after 1933. So it starts immediately when the Nazis take power. The first kind of acts of defiance are well known actually, they are not surprising. Jews started to write petitions against dismissals from jobs, losing shops, kind of beatings, and so on. Not only individual Jews but also Jewish representatives of Jewish communities, Jewish organizations. So in every archive in Germany, you can find hundreds of these petitions. And by the way, I just co-edited a book - about to co-edit a book about Jewish petitions, also to reevaluate them that they were not in vain, that they were also tools of political resistance. So I think they also need to be reevaluated. But, let's get to some examples. So, for example, in Frankfurt, already in March/April 1933, several Jews get prosecuted and tried because they publicly criticized the beatings and murder of some Jews by stormtroopers and the torture of Jews in one of these wild concentration camps. So for example, on April 1st, the day after the notorious anti-Jewish boycott, the state court in Frankfurt punished the merchant, Erich Löwenstein, who was born in 1908, for spreading rumors with one already pretty harsh sentence of one year in prison - just for spreading rumors - rumors what they called but in reality, he criticized what happened there. He had spoken with some acquaintances who were members of the Nazi Party and was kind of interrogating them about what are the goals of Nazi policies against the Jews. Do they want to drive out the Jews and why would they harm the Jews and beat - what is the reason for the beatings and the violence against the Jews? But Jews did not only criticize verbally the first wave of terror, but they also kind of started to actively fight against Nazi propaganda.
- 23:50 Wolf Gruner: Jews in Munich and Hamburg were arrested for smearing displays of the anti-Jewish/Semetic - antisemitic newspaper, *Der Stürmer*, for contesting the Hitler salute, or for

destroying Nazi flags, posters, or other Nazi symbols, and I want to share one of the acts with you.

24:14 Wolf Gruner: This is a case from Hamburg, where David Bornstein was arrested because he tried to destroy a Nazi Swastika, which you can see here, which was painted on a public bus. Here you see - this is kind of one of the first examples of historical reenactment. This is not David Bornstein, this is the guy the conductor of the bus who kind of poses as David Bornstein for the Gestapo so they can take a photo for their file. Here you see his wife was sitting up there, she's also not there but it is also kind of enacted. He was saying goodbye to her and while doing this kind of covering with his body he kind of tried to destroy with his walking stick the Swastika. So, he was arrested, and then he received five weeks in jail for this act of destruction of public property.

Public Protest and Act of Defiance
by German Jews after 1933

Hamburg - 1936 - David Bornstein - Born 1897

25:21 Wolf Gruner: Then we have throughout the 1930s, Jews who also as individuals try to kind of help communist resistance groups, but what I find much more important is actually that Jews responded to specific acts. So it was not random when they responded, and so for example you have, have heard of the anti-Jewish riots in Munich and in Berlin in spring, in summer of 1935, before the Nuremberg Laws were enacted. So these acts produced kind of complaints, critique of individual Jews, and several Jews in both places got arrested for this. For example, in Berlin, in July 1935, a business card flyer - a business card size flyer that means a really small flyer - was found in the mailbox of one of the biggest publishing houses in Berlin. And this contained the following message, and I quote, "Germany is a cultural disgrace today. I'm a German Jew, and I'm loyal to the emperor. In fact, the Germans should expel the foreigner, Hitler. Down with Hitler." End of quote.

26:42 Wolf Gruner: And this is the police report about this. I found it really ironic that he had the anonymous author of this signed with King Cohn because as many of you know probably, Cohn was the antisemitic stereotype name for Jews. So, he kind of twisted this around, and as far as I know, the author of the leaflet was never caught. During the month of July in 1935 alone, so when this flier was found, a hundred Jews in Berlin were arrested for critique, protest, just in Berlin by the Gestapo, hundred Jews, just in one month. And interesting is that the Gestapo in its monthly report for July actually states, Jews were born with disrespect to state authority. That's their line.

"...I am a German Jew...In fact, the Germans Should Expel the Foreign Hitler...Down with Hitler." / Police Report about an anonymous leaflet signed by King Cohn / berlin, July 1935

27:39 Wolf Gruner: These summer riots in Berlin were accompanied by a wave of new, local anti-Jewish measures and then followed, as I mentioned, by the Nuremberg Laws. Yet all over Germany, from Cologne to Konigsberg, Jews were not hindered by these Nuremberg Race Laws, they still tried to defy a lot of these anti-Jewish measures. They were ignoring local prohibitions to access swimming pools, cinemas, theaters, operas, libraries, others went to public courts to demand their rights after dismissals from jobs, and so on. And still, people spoke up in public, not just in Berlin, but for example, in Frankfurt, Rosalie Kowalski, she was born in 1887, she repeatedly cursed the Hitler Pact in public and told everybody who wanted to hear that Goebbels is always telling lies. For these comments, she was arrested and got eight months, no - 6 months in prison in 1937.

28:48 Wolf Gruner: She got these 6 months in prison under this law, which was enacted in 1934, and again here most historians thought this law was targeting political opponents of the Nazis, like Communists and Social Democrats. But under this law, almost, I think, 80 percent of the cases I've found, where the Jews were tried under this law. Yeah. So practically we can say today that this law, or this decree, actually was a tool to quell protest and resistance of Jews. However, from all these new sources even more is coming out, for example, very astonishing for me where - that I found unknown acts of Jewish self-defense. So for example in Frankfurt, 32-year-old Oskar Junghanz, did beat up a Hitler Youth teenager who was aiming with slingshots at Jews leaving a synagogue in 1936.

Law against Treacherous Attacks on the State and Party
and for the Protection of Party Uniforms
20 December 1934

30:00 Wolf Gruner: When his father came to the rescue of the Hitler Youth member, he slapped him also in the face. He was a stormtrooper. From the Shoah Foundation Visual History Archive, we learn that in several cases Jews - Jewish men got into brawls with stormtroopers on the street, sometimes with Nazi neighbors. For, as in the case of Joanne Winter's father, who knocked down a Nazi in his apartment house because he forbade his own neighbors, the Jewish neighbors to use the elevator. And in Berlin, Frank Theyleg, beat up two stormtroopers, not just one, two, because they terrorized his landlady, so the owner of the apartment home who was supposed to be - who was Jewish and was an old lady. So what we can see here there are a lot of occurrences of physical self-defense. In schools, Jewish teenagers before school, after school, and even on - in schoolyards, defended themselves against physical attacks - you find this all over in the testimonies - and interesting, not just boys but one-third of the cases I found in the testimonies were actually girls and they were not only defending themselves against girls but even against boys. There is one case where an interviewee saying - a woman - saying that she was - that the gang who

attacked her was very surprised when she knocked the teeth out of the boy. So, oh no it's - yeah, so now I want to share one of the interviews because it's not violence on the streets, so it was also acts of resistance against authorities.

31:51 Ingrid Frank: Courage is something. *Der Stürmer*, that was a German newspaper that which I can remember was always displayed in glass display cases in public buildings and I can remember so well looking at it and you know they had these horrible caricatures of Jews, you know, these little threatening men with these hooked noses. In any case, *Der Stürmer* had - when my Uncle Fritz's father died, who had also been a lawyer, there was a front-page story in *Der Stürmer*. His name was Josef Thal, that when Dr. Josef Thal died and the authorities went into his home, in his basement, they found the bodies of Jewish virgins and children, and he had probably used their blood in Passover rituals. That was the story in the *Stürmer*. My Uncle Fritz, his son, had been an officer in the German - during World War I, and as a matter of fact, had won the Iron Cross which is - I don't know if it's the highest - but a very high decoration, and when he read that story in *Der Stürmer* he put on his World War I uniform, his riding boots, his riding crop, put his medal on his chest and went down to the *Stürmer's* office and Streicher, Julius Streicher was there, the editor. And he marched up there in his uniform and up to the receptionist and said, I want to see Herr Streicher. And the receptionist said I'm sorry you have no appointment. And my Uncle just sort of pushed him aside and walked in there and walked up to Streicher's desk and Streicher looked up surprised - you know to see this German, uniformed German officer - and Uncle Fritz said, did you know Herr Dr. Josef Thal? And Streicher said no, and my Uncle took his whip and said, Then meet his son. And beat him a couple of times, turned around, fully expecting to be arrested, to be shot, to be something, walked out - nothing ever happened to him. And when all this -

- 34:10 Wolf Gruner: So this is by the way corroborated by another interview which tells the same story which is - has no family relationship to this woman. So, but I have to say, we can't kind of extract from these sources that everybody would be so courageous. So, for example, I examined 300 letters from a Jewish family in Düsseldorf to their son in the U.S., and in all these letters there's no critique, nothing to be seen in these letters. So not everybody would kind of be so courageous. However, interesting is it is often about the circumstances if they allow you to be that - courageous. So this letter exchange starts in I think 1934 and goes till 1939. In 1937, this - the man of the - the husband, who was a leather merchant, goes on one of the last business trips abroad, he kind of travels from Düsseldorf to Venlo, which is on the border of Germany in the Netherlands. In his hotel, he takes the letterhead of the hotel and he writes a fierce letter to his son about how the Nazis are persecuting the Jews. This kind of shows that he was scared of the censorship in Germany, but if possible, he still even those who would not act in Germany would then kind of act if there was a possibility.
- 35:45 Wolf Gruner: So, coming to the Pogrom of 1938, even then during this - during this night and day of violence, that didn't change the attitude of a lot of Jews, kind of that they would be more passive or anything. We have a lot of reports here where Jews tried to secure kind of goods, religious objects from synagogues, where they took photo - lists - kind of they wrote down lists of destroyed shops at night and they took photographs of the violence.
- 36:32 Wolf Gruner: So, some of the photographs we know today they actually originate from Jews who documented these crimes. And for example, here you can see - this is obvious that this is not taken by a sympathizer, this is taken from the opposite side of the street from a flat and kind of in an angle where you see that the person is hiding there. But, more

recently, I came across - this is also thanks to the Shoah Foundation Interviews - that we also overlooked a part of the Kristallnacht which is really I think - or had an impact on individual lives which is still to be evaluated, it is the destruction of private homes. And I just got more recently into research into this - some documents tell us that in some areas, in some towns, three-quarters of the Jewish homes were destroyed. Vandalized to a degree which we can't really imagine. So, we always talk about synagogues and shops, but there is a whole other side of destruction. And for example, this is a photograph of a destroyed apartment which was taken by the Jewish apartment owner. And I think this is again an act of defiance to document the results of the violence of the Kristallnacht.

38:01 Wolf Gruner: We have again people who criticized the violence of Kristallnacht in public. For example, Henriette Schaefer, she was born in 1882, entered a shop in Frankfurt and asked the owner, quote, "what are you saying about the fact that everything is destroyed and the synagogues are arsoned?" After the neighbor responded with an official narrative, Yeah this is the outrage of the people about the murder of the German diplomat by a Jew. Schaefer replied, quote, "this is not the people, but the government. They are all blackguards, scamps, and criminals. Hitler is the biggest bandit. If I could, I would poison them all." End of quote. She ended up with six months in prison for this comment. And some again tried to physically defend themselves against the violence. Like in Peine, Lower Saxony, a group of SS Men invaded approximately twenty Jewish homes and vandalized them, destroyed everything. When the SS broke into the Marburger family apartment and started to beat up the father, Hans, a 17-year-old boy, tried to fight them off. He was overwhelmed by the group of SS Men because he was alone, they locked him up later in the synagogue, and one of them shot the teenager to death. And then they arsoned the

synagogue. This is why a lot of the stories are forgotten because we just don't know about them.

- 39:38 Wolf Gruner: Another story I want to share with you is from Diane Jacobs. She is at the time, 16 years old, and she is a teenager in one of these retraining camps - HeChalutz camps, where they prepared for the - to emigrate to Palestine or other countries. So this camp, as many other of these retraining camps, are also vandalized - raided and vandalized during Kristallnacht by storm troopers or SS. So she talks about what happens when they vandalize. I hope I get the right minute. Yeah, so I think that's the right -
- 40:29 Diane Jacobs: [unclear] you see and now they are smashing everything in camp and then they make us - then they form two rows with the clubs and they make us walk through the rows and then they hit us with the clubs from both sides as we walk by.
- 40:45 Interviewer: Your whole family?
- 40:46 Diane Jacobs: No, there was not a family, the kids were with HeChalutz - there was no family. I'm now an orphan, you see.
- 40:49 Interviewer: Okay, you didn't - but you didn't clarify that, that you - okay. Okay.
- 40:55 Diane Jacobs: My family was nowhere near, my family was out of it already. I was not with my family. But anyway, the kids, you know the youngsters, and the boys they were bleeding and then all of a sudden I hear my turn and say hell, I'm not going to run. I'm going to walk. Here I am, I mean five foot nothing, I'm 5'1". Five nothing and I'm a skinny little girl and all of a sudden they was no fun anymore. I remember getting one on the back and that was it. I just walked through there slowly looking at all of them. Now here, big tough guys, you want to hit a little girl? What can I do about it? It's the

attitude. And I only got hit by one on the back, it hurt. And I got to the end of the line, one of them grabs me, grabs this hand, my right hand, and starts sawing into it with a rusty knife - pocket knife type thing. Well I had learned a little trick and that's sticking my head into someone's stomach, which doesn't feel great - and I turned around to see what I could do with him and I started fighting, and I started kicking with my legs, his legs - he wasn't very big either, he was young. Anyway, I finally managed to get my head out and under the knife. I twisted the knife out of his hand, I used the knife, I stabbed him and I dug my hand into his thigh - I don't know how I did it - it was just a fast thing that they had told me. And the others didn't notice it. So a couple of the guys - the others were too busy beating up on [unclear]. So a couple of the guys saw it and they dragged him underneath a bed, or some kind of sofa-type thing that hadn't been kicked over, so that the others wouldn't see him, he was bleeding but he wasn't dead. But he was bleeding. Anyway, that's when we took off.

43:04 Wolf Gruner: So, I have to say this is one of the facts working with these testimonies, and she - her whole testimony shows us one type of these individuals who I'm calling - they have kind of a resistance career - she's escaping several times from arrest so it's not her only act of defiance there that she's doing. But after the Kristallnacht, again, there is not kind of an end of protest of defiance among Jews. You have a lot of Jews who disobeyed new anti-Jewish rules, like to hand over precious metals, to wear special identification cards, and more interestingly, to adopt the discriminatory middle name, Sarah and Israel. I always thought okay, the Nazis assigned these names and everybody had to wear them. However, the German system works differently, this I learned now that when you have a name change you have to actually apply for it. So even that the Nazis ordered that every Jew had to wear this, as a result, every Jew had to apply for it. And in the archives, in all these cities where I went to, you find dozens and dozens

of files where Jews actually didn't fill out the forms, yeah? So, for example, in Berlin, Max Antler, who was a 60-year-old painter, declined a repeated request to fill out the forms, and even then after he was cited to a police station. And then Leipzig, 73-year-old Eda Schneider, she didn't apply neither for the - to adopt the discriminatory middle name Sarah, nor for the identification card which was marked for Jews.

44:56 Wolf Gruner: She was only, and this is interesting, she was only detected in 1941. That means two years after this was enacted. And then she received several months in prison for not adopting these names. You have again, people who acted against very specific measures. For example, in Vienna, the municipality expelled a lot of Jews from municipal rental housing in summer, 1939. And there, Doctor Arthur Singer went to the municipality and in public in this city hall, he loudly cursed Hitler and then urged fellow Jewish - Jews who were waiting in front of the office - to protest against the city order and to storm the offices with him. So, even when Jews got into jail for protesting, some of them still resisted, so there's the case of - from a tailor, Alfred Leviton, he was born in 1913. He had been castigated with several months in prison for being critical against the Nazi regime and the persecution, exactly nine months. In spring 1940, that means already during the - what he did in jail - he smuggled letters into printed department store catalogs, which they printed in jail, with critique of the Nazi regime. So, who received these department store mail-order catalogs, would see kind of the writings from him, where he criticized Hitler and blamed Germany's war against Poland on Hitler's mistake to persecute the Jews.

46:43 Wolf Gruner: So I think I need to slowly come to an end, but I wanted to say that, you have people sometimes doing just one act of defiance, then you have those who do this all kind of a long row of them, or some are doing a multitude of acts at the

same time. So, one of the very few traces I found in diaries is the following one. Max Mannheimer was performing forced labor in a road construction site in Bohemia in 1940. And he wrote in his diary, and I quote, "My home is in a wooden hut behind a toolshed. From there I go to the public park, despite the 8 pm curfew, and despite the ban to visit the park. On my way, I count the signs with the slogan 'Forbidden for Jews.' In total there are six. Later at 11 pm, I ripped the signs out of the ground and throw some of them in the bushes, and some of them in the creek." And then the diary says, "However, all my courage proved futile. The next evening, all the signs had reemerged, and for a second time, I just didn't have the courage. I'm not a hero." Which I would kind of challenge, right? I mean, even that he went another time to the park next day and realized that they'd replaced the signs was already saying, showing us that he was pretty courageous, I would say.

48:20 Wolf Gruner: So, I think the last thing I want to mention is it is many of the acts of protest were kind of tried in these special courts. But then I saw that actually regular courts also tried a lot of Jews for defiance of Nazi measures. For, not - for example, for not respecting the national curfew against Jews, like Mannheimer did. But also, and Jews did this for many reasons: they wanted to visit cinemas, which were forbidden, so they were kind of doubling and tripling the crimes they actually committed against the anti-Jewish measures. Or, for example, a 17-year-old boy in Frankfurt, he went out every night, breaking the curfew, and when the Allied bombers circled into kind of in Frankfurt, he waited for them, and when they closed in, he set off wrong fire alarms to divert the fire trucks from the actual bombing sites. He did this dozens of times until he got caught in a trap by the Gestapo. So you see, there were various reasons why people broke the curfew, and even that we are now in the - and where the persecution lasted eight years, and the measures were evermore radical,

this didn't mean to, that Jews were discouraged. Sometimes, some Jews actually start only then to act.

49:51 Wolf Gruner: For example, in Munich, a former real estate broker, Beno Neuberger, he was an elderly man, and he was also ordered, as all the Jews, in September 1941, to wear the yellow star. He is one of the protagonists of my book. So after the star was ordered, he kind of changes his whole attitude. He was a little more fatalistic until this point, but this kind of changed everything for him, that he was humiliated to wear the star in public. And what he does now is he sends out dozens of postcards, with foresighted comments on them, such as, "The eternal mass murderer, Hitler, disgusting!" Or, "Murderer of 5 million." And just hold on a second, he writes this in 1941, where it's not really - nobody knows the outcome of what will happen during the next 2 or 3 years. So this is really remarkable. He gets caught, unfortunately, and he is then tried for treason which is ironic that Jews are tried for treason, right? In front of this very notorious people's court in Berlin. And there he states, in front of the people's court, asked why he did this. He said that he hated Hitler, especially for his pronouncement of January of 1939 to exterminate all Jews. He received the death penalty and was decapitated in September 1942.

51:36 Wolf Gruner: I think this was remarkable and a lot of the people in which I found suffered kind of arrests, also deportation like the 17-year-old boy who got three years in prison and was then deported directly from prison to Auschwitz. But from the Shoah Foundation testimonies, we also know that other people survived. A lot of these acts never left traces in the archives. So, I want to conclude with kind of summarizing a little bit these findings. So when we kind of change our perspective to define resistance as any individual or group action, we see countless acts of defiance and protest emerge. Now we can - and this was interesting to me - we can

for the first time understand why in a lot of these Gestapo and SS reports there are these phrases which are kind of frequently emerging: The Jews are impudent. And I always thought they put this in so that they can justify more radical measures. But if you look at all the evidence I presented, there is a grain of truth of this kind of account, right? So we have long understood this - these kind of notes, and I think we can say now that many Jews, men, and women, over time employed changing strategies in response to a very contradictory set of persecutions. First, it was against Nazi propaganda, Nazi violence, and economic measures. Then against local restrictions. Again, against violence, or then segregation in-laws and decrees. And finally, which I didn't talk about, facing deportation or forced labor. Jews spoke up in offices, restaurants, on the streets, or in their neighborhood. They wrote anti-Hitler postcards and leaflets. And they defended themselves physically, which was probably much more common than we formerly assumed.

53:51 Wolf Gruner: This kind of courage could be found in all elements of the Jewish population. Regardless of gender, age, beliefs, social status. And what I can say from my research: this kind of courage, such resistance is not an exception, but probably we can't also say now that this is the rule. But I think in general we should say, it is much more widespread than we ever imagined. And I think we should change our historical narrative of the Holocaust and include these many acts of defiance and protest and the idea of the passive suffering of the Jews should be thrown out forever. We can now say that these courageous acts responded to specific measures, specific violence, and humiliations, and for us, it is important to preserve this memory. Not just to an extent - as kind of as an array of individual reactions to specific and diverse local regional and central measures - but as part of their agency which is kind of neglected in many cases. And I want to quote as a conclusion the Berlin Rabbi Max Nussbaum, he later

recalled, I quote, “We were beseeched in a hundred of different manners, and therefore we fought back in a hundred of different manners.” End of quote. Thank you.

55:40 [Q&A]

55:45 Speaker 1: Yes, I was wondering about non-Jewish individual resistance. I know about the White Rose Group, but were there others that were supportive of Jewish and anti-Nazi activities?

56:00 Wolf Gruner: Yeah, this is also I think a very important question, and although I focused on Jewish defiance and protest, interestingly, on the way I encountered an equal amount of non-Jewish protest against persecution of the Jews. So not just general political dissent against the Nazis, no, very specifically that there were non-Jewish Germans arrested and tried for public protest against the persecution. All over the 1930s, very similar to what the Jews did there, and interestingly, the punishment was also similar. So I think there's also - we have to rethink also how the non-Jewish Germans reacted, and I think, but I have to make a complete picture - I looked into how Berliners, specifically, because my sources are the most rich in Berlin - how they reacted, and what I can say is: the non-Jewish Berliners, on the one hand, you have many more actually showing solidarity, support, even protest against the persecution, but on the other hand, I found also many more joining in the violence, joining in looting, denouncing Jews. So you have the idea of this kind of - there are some fanatic perpetrators, then you have a big indifferent mass, and then you have the victims, it's kind of - I think it's outdated and we have to revise this. I think the margins are much bigger, and to be indifferent was almost no possibility because everybody was exposed to what happened kind of on a daily basis, practically. You could be in different

practically - living in the woods as a kind of forest ranger but not in kind of daily life in a city or in a village. That is - yeah -

- 58:02 Speaker 2: Have you managed to assemble enough data to draw any demographic conclusions about the resisters? Mostly women, mostly teenagers, etcetera?
- 58:15 Wolf Gruner: Yeah this is a fascinating question. So in total, I have several hundred cases. I never counted them, but my kind of impression is, as I kind of mentioned in the conclusion, there is not - there's not a bigger number of men than women. There's not a bigger number of young people than I was expecting, actually, but there are a lot of elderly people protesting, and sometimes I can't even make sense out of it. For example, I found more elderly people protest on not adopting the middle name, yeah, than younger people. Which I think makes sense in a way; they are, I mean they have their whole life, for younger people, it's easier, but this is just preliminary. And then social status, education, you have all strands of the Jewish population there so there is not - you can't say there's a special character or a special origin of the people kind of favors them. That's not my impression, you find people from every strand of the Jewish population, every age, yeah. And I think this is actually, by the way, if I can add this, an important lesson for me, because if you think that Jews under these circumstances can protest, be defiant, resist, and not just a few of them, or some particular part of the population, but kind of across the board, this is also a lesson that practically everybody can under certain circumstance, resist. Yeah, if they can. Yeah.
- 1:00:05 Speaker 3: I'm curious to know what your thoughts are about how that resistance if it did, progressed as the you know, quote, "final solution" progressed, you know, there was [19]42, [19]43, was there still resistance and what was the psychology if that disappeared?

1:00:26 Wolf Gruner: Yeah, so I ran out of time otherwise I would've kind of also detailed this a little bit better. So what we can say is equally - we can't say there's more resistance in the beginning than in the end - I found a lot of acts actually during the - and also at the very very late stage when deportations are already going on from Germany to Poland. And just the nature of the acts of defiance or resistance changes. So for example, although also as I mentioned, right in the beginning like Hata Reiss, she kind of speaks up in public, but you have many more who are escaping from deportations. And this is kind of where what many more people already know, so many people went into hiding. And this is, I think, also part of defiance when you go into hiding, and I think in Berlin alone in February 1943, there was the so-called factory action where Jews were rounded up in factories and industrial enterprises where they worked as forced laborers. This was a kind of an action which took place in one day, in this very day, 4,000 Jews - 4,000 Jews - went into hiding in Berlin, 4,000. Think about the number, and they all did this individually. There was no kind of telephone chain. There was no kind of circular written, Go into hiding. These were their individual decisions, made on the fly, to escape from deportation. Which meant then, months, years of hiding, somewhere exchanging places under really cruel circumstances. So I think this is also part of the whole story. Yeah? That these individual decisions are also part of the story of defiance and resistance. And maybe, the last one, before you ask the question, just as to add, some Jews prepared for this - many did the decision to escape from deportation on the fly - but some prepared. So, I came across one case which I want to share, because it's really spectacular, so the Gestapo raids a factory and encounters a secret apartment in this factory. Turns out, and in this secret apartment, they find handguns, live ammunition, suitcases, forged ID cards. So who lives in this apartment? It's a man who is actually a Jewish forced laborer, but, and now it gets really crazy, runs the factory. Because the factory is actually

Aryanized by a guy who kind of had no expertise in running a business. So he learns that one of his forced laborers is a former merchant - hires him, he incognito, runs and manages the factory as a business and his wife is the secretary and they live in the secret apartment. But he knows at some point somebody will come across this fact - they will discover this maybe - so he prepares with guns, papers, for this day. And fortunately, or unfortunately, he is not there when the Gestapo raid happens. They kind of give out a call to find him, and several days later, on the street, they find him. And he is shot on the street in Berlin in plain daylight because they suspect that he has a handgun on him, and that is why he is shot. And he dies then in the Jewish hospital a day later in Berlin.

- 1:04:25 Speaker 4: I'm interested. You talked about some of the victims who were put in jail for - since for 6 months, or eight months, or a year. At what point does the German civil courts take over and what point do the Nazis have jurisdiction over the situation? Was there a time when the civil courts were taken over by the Nazis and the Nazis determined the sentences for everybody? Or throughout World War II was there still a German civil court system that administered justice or injustice?
- 1:05:10 Wolf Gruner: Yeah, thank you for this question because sometimes we have to - there is a misconception that the Nazis ruled everything. But in reality, they still perceived Germany as a legal state, kind of running on a legal system. What happened is all these Jews were tried in two forms of courts. One was this special court which was established by the Nazis very early on against political opponents. But they were not run purely by Nazis. They hired judges. They had prosecutors. You can say the prosecutors often were - you can see this in the documents - more antisemitic, but the judges, not always. And so I have even acquittals from these special courts. When somebody protests in public, if there

were not credible witnesses, or they had a good witness who kind of tried to bail them out. So it is kind of interesting, the dynamics in these courts, and the civil courts, they run throughout. There is over time - because of the antisemitic framework - there is the ruling that is more radical against Jews, and there are also more kind of Nazi judges and prosecutors working in these courts. But they were never replaced by a Nazi system, or it's never happening that somebody could say, we just put them in a concentration camp. Interesting, that's how I come to my sources for - that I find all these regular courts proceeding Jews there.

1:06:44 Speaker 5: Hi, you didn't really talk much about your personal background. I was wondering what motivates you to make this your area of study?

1:06:55 Wolf Gruner: So, full reveal, I'm not Jewish. I grew up in East Germany, so I think one of my driving motives was a very personal experience in East Germany, which kind of made me explore this topic. On the one hand, I was raised in an anti-fascist -fascist, communist regime. So I was aware of Nazi crimes very early on. But then - and this is really personal - my first love was half-Vietnamese half-German, and when I walked around with her, I was 18, 19, she experienced a lot of racist slurs. East Germany. So I started to look into how is racism evolving? How do people explain it? And the explanation at the time was there is a state-sponsored ideology, but there was none in East Germany because the whole idea was Workers of the world united. So how is there a state-sponsored ideology which is the opposite of racist, but the people on the ground acting racist? How does this go together? So that's when I decided to leave my life as an artist and to study history and the first and foremost example in my - I mean in Germany is the Holocaust, to study racism. And so that's how I kind of started this, and it - until today I try to understand what are the factors for racism? And in the end for

mass murder, but kind of this is the way to get there. Does this - and maybe what to add to this, I think some of the perspectives I have, actually I'm - and this is kind of ironic - I think my upbringing in a dictatorship because I understood very early on when I started to study the Holocaust that there are misconceptions - how a dictatorship works. Because dictatorships never work top-bottom. They always work in a mutual dynamic between the top and the bottom. East Germany would not function just by pure repression. It needed the people. So why are people attracted to it? So this is kind of then the set of questions I address then equally to Nazi Germany. See, why are people attracted to participating? Why are then some people not attracted to this? Why are they resisting? So that's kind of the set of questions which I have practically coming from my upbringing.

1:09:45 Susanne Hillman: We'll take one more question.

1:09:48 Speaker 6: Well, I'll start with thanking you for a very provocative lecture, and reassurance that some of the things we hoped were true were. But most of the examples you've given, with the exception of this woman - were nonviolent. Did you come across any episodes of actual violence where some aggrieved person as we're unfortunately too accustomed to nowadays goes and shoots up everybody?

1:10:15 Wolf Gruner: No, not really. But I - my experience now in the archives is saying me, I would not be surprised. Yeah? Because some of the acts of protests, they often are triggered by despair or by humiliation, so there is rage sometimes you notice in the phrasing of how they protest and so I would not want - I would not be surprised that this happened. But until now, I haven't come across this. But what I think is there are some group activities where, for example - which is not so well known but should also be honored is the Baum group, which is kind of a group of forced laborers in Berlin who kind of

sabotage, do leaflets in 1941 and 1942 - it's very late - and then arson a propaganda exhibit in the center of Berlin. Yeah? So I mean there are - there is more still what we have to have in this full picture.

1:11:24 Susanne Hillman: Please join me to thank Professor Gruner for a wonderful lecture.