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Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide

Reflections on Sexual Violence, Agency, and Sex Work

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Transcribed by: Rachel E Lieu

[Holocaust Living History Workshop](#)

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- Time Transcription
- 00:00 Speaker 1: This program contains mature discussion and language. Viewer discretion is advised.
- 00:10 [Read Write Think Dream / The Library UC San Diego Channel / www.uctv.tv/library-channel]
- 00:15 [Sexual Barter in Times of Genocide: Reflections on Sexual Violence, Agency, and Sex Work / Dr. Anna Hájková, University of Warwick @ankahajkova]
- 00:16 Dr. Anna Hájková: In the next 40 minutes, I want to offer several reflections on the nature of sex work in the Holocaust. I want to lay out the differences between rape and violent sexual barter, critique the notion of enforced prostitution, make a point about agency, and push for a more open and less judgmental history. Now, I have to start based on elephant in the room. What do I mean with sexual barter? It's a concept that I developed about 10 years ago that came out as an article in the feminist journal of *Signs*. It means exchange of sex, attention, relationship, affection, long or short-term, onetime off or lasting, for resources or protection. Sexual barter can include sexual acts but does not have to. It is an exchange of all of these acts for resources, protection, life, food, and such things. Today, I will introduce you to four case studies in sexual barter between victims in the concentration camps and ghettos, sexual barter between perpetrators and victims, between straight sexual barter, and queer sexual barter with men and women both selling sexual services in order to save themselves. I will not touch today on rescue and sexual barter, but just as a hint, Katya Gusarov has covered it in her article in the special issue of *German History* on Holocaust, Sexuality, Stigma that I edited last year.
- 01:52 Dr. Anna Hájková: But before we get there, I need to start with discomfort of classical feminist studies in Holocaust studies vis-a-vis sex work. Now, those of you who are familiar a little bit with Holocaust studies will know how immensely difficult it has been in the last 40 years in Holocaust studies for gender and women's history to be established. Today it is a well-established field, but in the beginning and until, well, maybe 10 years ago, and actually, even in my time, there has been an immense backlash and this backlash was often quite vicious and quite personal. And maybe this is one of the reasons why if some topics have been addressed, it was usually sexual violence, but never sexual barter. Most often, this is a topic that was simply avoided. If it was touched on, it was either told as a proof of someone's moral failure and we will come to some of the echos of that narrative before, or as a facilitating framework, which if you have looked at Jorge Semprún, *What a Beautiful Sunday!* or Ka-tzatziki, it's quite a frequent example, by the ways the framework, how often sexuality and gender are depicted in the popular depiction of the Holocaust, or as a story of sexual violence of young innocent women who've abused [unclear], *Aryan Papers* comes to mind. Or, one of the examples I will discuss today of Ann Hydráková, née Kovanicová.
- 03:21 Dr. Anna Hájková: Anyway, the narrative that we had had, is almost the vintage second-wave feminism of 1970s and 1980s, which is an important narrative, but obstructs, I argue, some of our ways how to understand people's agency and also what is the meaning of sex work. This view has been imprinted into scholarship, important scholars whose work, I value very much come to mind, [unclear] or Marion

Kaplan and some of the expressions that you find across, just to give you a bit of manual, is you look for expressions such as enforced prostitution, or survival prostitution, or hunger prostitution. These notions, when we look at them more closely, are problematic because you find expressions such as a woman who sold sex while she was in a concentration camp. Of course, she did it only during wartime. When you put it into the context of sex work, more generally, does it imply that women who sell sex in normal times do something inappropriate and only the women who are forced to do it during wartime and because of difficult situations are then okay? It has a classist statement, and it's a statement that a priori stigmatizes sex work. These trends, I argue, lead our focus from women's agency and thus obstruct our understanding how society and extremists works. There is also a bit of an implication that Holocaust societies are somehow different from other societies. Maybe this is even not a society at all this notion implies.

05:07 Dr. Anna Hájková: It's almost as if we needed to prove how evil the Nazis were, Nazis were evil, committing genocide is evil. But if we kind of continue singling out of the Holocaust as a society apart, we'll not come to understand it. The societies in the ghettos and concentration camps, people in hiding, are still versions of a society. Similarly to our society today, being a version of a society, the society in a pandemic in London, the society in Texas under snow without electricity. How do I get there? By operating within the context of the history of sex work. And I want to draw here your attention, many of you will be familiar with it, to the doyenne of history of prostitution, Judith Walkowitz, who for many years taught gender history at Johns Hopkins, who theorized in late [19]70s and early [19]80s that we need to see prostitution as labor, sex work as work. Indeed, this is the activist time of the 1970s to recognizing that this is a sold service, akin to cooks who sell cooked food, or the bakers or to hairdressers, and to whatnot. Let me show you, and then I will be almost done with historiography, but this is a really important topic. The frequent phrase, she sold her body or she sold herself. You kind of stumble across it and often don't even pay attention to it, but this phrase does some heavy lifting in stigmatization. That is a [unclear] and others showed that the phrase implies that these women sold something that ought not to be traded, that is irreplaceable. The phrase equates sexual act with the purchase of an entire human being, even the soul. If you sell sex, you do not lose your arm, your vagina, part of your soul, similar to when you bake cakes, you don't become a lesser being, you offer a service.

07:09 Dr. Anna Hájková: Two more points. What's the difference between sexual barter and rape? Many instances of sexual barter in the Holocaust were violent. In fact, the more I work on the topic, the more I think, that actually, almost all romantic and sexual encounters in the Holocaust, and indeed many social encounters in the Holocaust, were somehow marked by hierarchies, dependencies, and violence. Therefore, I would differentiate rape and sexual barter. Sexual violence can include the moment of choice, but it doesn't have to. Rape never includes the moment of choice. So a person can be coerced when they are in hiding into offering sex to the rescuer. But if they do not have the moment of choice, even if the choice means being chucked on the street, it is still a choice and we should take it seriously. Now, where do we operate with consent, especially informed consent in all of this? I don't think that informed consent is a useful category here, and people like Ilsa van [unclear] and other feminist scholars have provided some useful leeway here. Therefore, I think we should really throw consent out of the window because we will not really find any

moments of meaningful informed consent during the Holocaust, but agency is a useful one.

08:30 Dr. Anna Hájková: Now, this book that came out in a beautiful English translation in the UK [United Kingdom] about five or six years ago was a game-changer. Alas, it did not come out in the US [United States], which is really sad for American colleagues teaching Nazi Germany or gender history. It's the story of Marie Jalowicz Simon, a young, attractive Berlin Jewish woman who survived in hiding, and she really told the whole story and was quite blunt, [unclear] and she spoke about her own sexual barter, but also about what it exactly costs to go into hiding. It could mean that people asked her to babysit, not to eat too much, to be nice to them, to help them with the dishes, to do a whole lot of things, but they also asked it of everyone. You see how hiding is a part of a barter and sexual services are just one of the many services that you offer in exchange. It's also quite interesting what services Jalowicz Simon was willing to give and what kind of made her uncomfortable. This was a bit of an earthquake in Holocaust studies because Jalowicz Simon really discuss sexual barter as one of many things. She did not stigmatize it and that brought many colleagues to thinking, and yet, one historian, analyzing Jalowicz Simon, wrote, and I quote, "Are these choices or choiceless choices?" And here she operated with Lawrence Langer to whom I will come later.

010:0
5 Dr. Anna Hájková: I do not have an answer but here's my critique of this, are these choices or are these choiceless choices? I think as historians of sexuality and the Holocaust, we must not shy away from these awful difficult answers. This is what I will offer in the following, and you will not be surprised when I say these are choices. Choiceless choices is not a useful concept. Now, the first example is Anna Kovanicová, who's better now under her married name Anna Hyndráková. She's still alive, an important Czech-Jewish historian of the Holocaust and also the Communist resistance. You see her with the little red arrow at the wedding of her cousin. It's quite a difficult story. I can start in the middle of these difficult stories, who was born in 1928 in Prague and deported via Theresienstadt Auschwitz family camp and the satellite camp of Gross-Rosen. In January 1945, she fled with her best friend, Doris W, who was three years older. They also took along Eva Preissová who was born in 1924. So, you have three women. One of them is 21 years old, one is 19 years old, and then you have 16-year-old Anna.

11:17 Dr. Anna Hájková: Briefly, after they escaped at the end of January, beginning of February 1945, thus two or three months before liberation, they were caught and brought to concentration camps near what is today the German-Polish border at Görlitz, or Zgorzelec. In both of these camps, the women were treated halfway okay. I mean, really they were not threatened on life, they could wash and dress and get new food, but the men expected to have with some of them. Kovanicová described in her memoir that she wrote in the 1970s, the last weeks of the war as a total shock and ongoing rape. After the first night, the head Kapo and her friends tried to talk sense into Kovanicová. They even told her that they will pick a young and beautiful lover for her. Now I want to follow her voice. And so I decided to be quote-unquote, reasonable but when they came in the evening, Kurt, Tadeusz, and Dolek, I started panicking and fought all night. He begged and tried it with kindness and without, I did too. I whispered to him, you are a Pole, don't be a jerk like them. It was terrible. I was probably hysterical and I still had the fever. The same repeated the third night. I don't

even know if I lost my virginity or not. End of quote. The story's really complicated. You see it's narrated by this profoundly traumatized young adult woman. But a few days later, the three women arrive, or the three young women arrive into the next concentration camp in the neighborhood where there is a Cologne Jew who took a liking in Kovanicová. She still fought but became resigned. And I quote, I fought only a little, I no longer had the will or the strength. End of quote.

- 13:06 Dr. Anna Hájková: Then she followed on to explain that the Jew from Cologne was a helpful man who wanted to take care of her. At this stage, she made a following startling statement, quote, I was sorry that he did not fall in love with Eva. I thought she would have not minded so much. She once even went for a cube of margarine. Is this she means Eva Preissová, she gave her pseudonym in her memoir. Preissová was called slightly differently, but I was able to find this photograph of her. Eva Preissová and Anna Kovanicová and Doris survived the war, and after the war, Eva and Anna shared an apartment in Prague where they had conflicts because Preissová chose to be sexually active with different men and Kovanicová disapproved. What you have here in the narrative is stigmatization of women who are sexually active with a number of men and also stigmatization of sex work. Kovanicová-Hydráková, as I mentioned, is still alive. The third woman, Doris W, passed away about 10 years ago and when she told the story of the last months, she told it quite differently. Preissová's fate took me quite a lot of digging to uncover. She emigrated to Chile and to France by her one surviving sister, moved, married, did some publications in sciences, and died in the early 2000s. From what I am able to see, she never bore a testimony, and what I want to point out here is, when we read Kovanicová-Hydráková, we have a clear example of sexual violence and rape and very limited, if any, choice. But we also have the story of a young woman, of a teenager, who looks at an older woman who decides to sell sex, at least if you follow Kovanicová, does not mind it so much but she is judged because she does that.
- 15:08 Dr. Anna Hájková: In fact, it is a similar narrative to those of you who are familiar with the Ringelblum Archive in the Warsaw Ghetto. In the Warsaw Ghetto, in the Ringelblum Archive is quite an iconic collection about Cecilia Slepak, who looked at gender and women's history of Jews in the ghetto, and she famously interviewed twice a Mrs. Guta who engaged in sex work. And thanks to Cecilia Slepak, we have these accounts of Guta, but these are often quite judgmental, and one of the judgmenting, on of the judging moments that stigmatized Guta's decision to support herself and her family with sex work is that Slepak records that Guta did so only because she was sexually abused as a child, and in this, we can recognize the narrative that there is something psychologically wrong with women who engage in sex work.
- 16:08 Dr. Anna Hájková: Next example is heterosexual sexual barter in Theresienstadt, the story of Alice Haberland which is a pseudonym. In 1942, a 24-year-old woman from a very upper, not even upper, middle-class, upper-class from Berlin, whose parents lived in a so-called mixed marriage and whose father had been just murdered, was deported from Berlin to Theresienstadt. Not only were her parents, quite a wealthy family, they were also very established, almost aristocratic Jewish family. And because her father had been murdered and her mother was gentile, she arrived to Theresienstadt on her own, only with her sister who was severely sick with tuberculosis. At first, Haberland was shocked and disturbed with hunger and

overcrowding. After few days or weeks, Alice found her feet and started providing for herself and her sister by offering sex for food. Later, when her three elderly disabled female relatives arrived to Theresienstadt, she took them under her wing as well.

- 17:21 Dr. Anna Hájková: This changed some six months later, when the revered leader of German Jews, the rabbi Leo Baeck and a friend of Haberland's family arrived to Theresienstadt. Leonard Baker, who wrote a biography on Leo Baeck that came out in 1979 and received the Pulitzer Prize, Baker used a specific key to describe Haberland's position and I quote, this lovely young woman had known all the comforts that money can bring and she missed them in Theresienstadt. The crowded conditions, the shortage of food, and the dirt eroded her sense of pride and decency. In hopes of an extra scrap of food, a feeling of warmth, a space to breathe in, she became a prostitute. Years later she said, I don't know what I did, why I did what I did. You can't explain those things. Judaism has no dark and private confessional booth. It does, however, have love and sympathy for the troubled individual. I needed someone to understand my action. She said, and I used Baeck. His compassion for human errors would not allow him to hold my acts against me. He was my conscience like my father. End of quote.
- 18:37 Dr. Anna Hájková: Haberland stopped selling sex. Two months later, her 80-year-old grandmother died. Haberland survived the ghetto, never gave testimony to any of the many Holocaust oral history projects, and never mentioned her sex work to her relatives, which is why I gave her pseudonym here. Haberland's story should force us to depart from interpreting sex work as discrediting and victimizing but further as a resource. A young woman alone in a foreign ghetto, she was German speaking, she did not speak Czech, without any connections. [unclear] woman who was able to provide not only for herself but for, four relatives. She sold sex for much more than what Baker called a scrap of food because this is not just a scrap, she was providing for herself and four other women who were so disabled or very sick. But also, it is worthwhile to look twice at this scrap of food. What is for us a scrap of food? What is for us 20 dollars or 30 dollars for shopping? It's a lot of food in the context of concentration camps. These can mean vastly different conditions, food for a lot of time, sometimes also protection from transport or better accommodation. Indeed, it is the difference between life and death.
- 19:57 Dr. Anna Hájková: Third story. Now we will, okay, I wanted to show you a little picture of Alice Haberland from her reparation file. Third story. Here, we move to the queer [unclear]. Those of you who are interested in queer history will be quite familiar with Josef Kohout, aka Heinz Heger, an Austrian gay prisoner who was one of the very few prisoners with pink triangle who bore a testimony. He was persecuted according to paragraph 129 of the Austrian Criminal Code, same-sex intimacy. By the way, the Austrians had a different criminal code throughout the war to persecute gay and lesbians. In Germany, you had 175. In Austria, 100, 129, and 129 criminals was also female same-sex intimacy but Kohout was man. By the way, the book came out as Heinz Heger because when it came out in early [19]70s, just after homosexuality has been decriminalized, he chose to publish it under an alias, but we know that his real name was Josef Kohout. So, in scholarship, both names are used, which can be confusing but don't be confused.
- 21:09 Dr. Anna Hájková: Kohout was lucky to survive Sachsenhausen and Flossenbürg. In his memoir, and if you haven't read it yet, I encourage you to read *The Men with the*

Pink Triangle. It also was then dramatized as a play and later as a movie under the name *Bent*. Kohout recalls that at first, he was sexually assaulted. He appeared to his fellow prisoners as fair game because as a man with the pink triangle - and this is how the Nazis marked prisoners persecuted because of queerness, male prisoners - he was as such perceived as feminine, and therefore, sexually available. It is very clear in the depictions of this first sexual encounter, this assault and rape, that there was no moment of choice and this is rape. Indeed it's actually particularly harrowing and interesting to have such a depiction that we are so used to be told from a female perspective, from a male perspective. Later, he was forced to become the lover of first one and later another Capo, prisoner functionary, men who identified as straight but being in the monosexual concentration camps, had relationships with Kohout. Kohout described how the first relationship did not come about from his free will, but how he swapped the first partner for the next because he was a better match. He was a bigger shot in the concentration camp.

22:30 Dr. Anna Hájková: And here, you can see how Kohout was able to build up his leeway and to improve his positions, expand his control because particularly significantly, he kind of uses sexual barter to improve his conditions in the concentration camps. But what I also want to draw your attention to is how both men who identified as straight and had relationship with Kohout because this is a monosexual camp and this is the time before they opened the first brothel, both of the men grew to like Kohout and even engaged in gestures reserved for established couples such as jealousy, taking him on labor assignments outside, or crying from joy when he visited them in the camp hospital in the sick bay. And I just kind of included here because it's one of my favorite points that our draw attention. How we can read the concentration camps and gender beyond the binary male and female and also associative between straight and versus queer. With the help of these relationships, Kohout was able to make a career within the prisoner society, became a prisoner functioner himself. At the end of his narrative, could afford the ultimate status a freely chosen a relationship with another prisoner who himself was in imprisoned as a pink triangle.

23:56 Dr. Anna Hájková: Some of you will also be familiar with the narrative of Gad Beck, queer a so-called half-Jewish Berlin resistance fighter who bartered sex for the men and women whom he helped to go into hiding. What I want to just briefly point out here is how incredibly gendered agents and sexual barter between men and women is narrated. It is even more pronounced for heterosexual-identified men who experience queer sexual barter, as [unclear] and it's even more differently narrated for men who engage in heterosexual barter. For example, Cornelia Osborne has written on French POWs [prisoners of war], male POWs, who in Germany engaged in relationships, by coerce, into relationships with German housewives and how these men narrate these quite clearly coercive relationships as sexual triumph, that kind of proved a prowess. How then heterosexual identified men narrate queer and forced-queer sexual barter as something violent but not necessarily sexual, or something that is disgusting, but it's disgusting because the men who forced them into this relationship are disgusting because they're gay, not because of this coercion. And then we have yet a different narrative, this cohort, and then we have yet different narrative, these women and coercive sexual barter. And I just kind of want to throw it out there because of course it correlates obviously our expectation of sexuality, of violence, and of gender roles.

- 25:39 Dr. Anna Hájková: The last story that I want to touch on is Margot, and it's a story that I feel particularly tenderly about. Margot, who is still alive, in fact, it was her birthday just today, was born in Bielefeld, well she grew up in Bielefeld in Germany, having been born in 1928. When she was 14, she was deported with her parents and younger sister to Theresienstadt where, like most young children and youngsters, was accommodated in a youth home. Youth homes in Theresienstadt were separated according to age and to gender. In this youth home, [unclear] she met the girl whom she calls the love of her life, the young, attractive teenager from Vienna called Dita. In May 1944, Dita and later Margot were deported to Auschwitz family camp, and in July [19]44 Dita and her aunt decided to pass the selection. They knew that the camp is going to be closed down, that everybody who's not seen as fit for labor, they'll be executed.
- 26:50 Dr. Anna Hájková: Margot decided to leave behind her biological family to follow Dita. She recalled I would have gone with her anywhere. Her parents and her little sister decided not to pass the selection because they did not believe that the 12 or 13-year-old sister would have had a chance. So you see a moment of agency, of choice, of kinship, of following the girl with whom she was in love and leaving behind her nuclear family. It's a story that can be unpacked in a number of ways, but I just want to read here the queer kinship. And together with 600 other women, Dita and Margot were deported to Hamburg where they went through three satellite camps; Dessauer Ufer, Neugraben, and Tiefstack. I actually want to zoom in on the layers of sexual barter that happens between Margot, Dita, and other women. The two girls, maybe because they were younger, maybe because they were in love, maybe for a number of other reasons, actually recalled Hamburg as a happy time, as almost as a kind of pink bubble.
- 28:01 Dr. Anna Hájková: Margot was clear that maybe because she was still 16 and 17, it was for her not as difficult as for other women. She was not quite so hungry, and in the winter when there was snow, they would go sledding down the hill in the camp where they were brought. But they also witnessed homophobia of other women who sometimes witnessed the two girls kissing and hugging on their bunk bed and saying something like, this is not normal. The aunt of Dita had to defend the two of them because they are just teenagers and it does not matter. But what I want to pay, draw your attention to is that Margot in her oral history to me, three years ago when I visited her, I came across the following story that I want to share with you. I quote from our oral history. Margot: Then I worked for the foreman of labor, the guy that was in charge for us. He assigns the jobs, I mean, I don't even remember what jobs I had. He asked me to work in his cabin. What I had to do is heat up his lunch, clean his cabin, and I was indoors. So when I heated up his lunch, I used to steal meat from it before. And this is the meat that she would stuff in her bra and then share it with Dita. Now I go back to the quote. I remember him saying, you know, things are getting tough, I'm getting less meat, and we both laughed. I remember, but I let him touch me for that sexually. He didn't rape me, he touched me. I, Anna: That was most unpleasant. Margot: Yes. You do a lot when you are hungry. Anna: Was he like old and disgusting? Margot: He wasn't old. He was a fairly decent nice guy.
- 29:45 Dr. Anna Hájková: You see here how I completely fell out of my role as an interviewer who was supposed to sit and listen and not ask stupid questions. My first reaction even as a woman who has established sexual barter to say, he touched you sexually.

He must have been old and disgusting. Because this is how we kind of read everything. Margot insisted that this was a decent man who stuck fingers into her private parts. That is something that they never discussed, that he never tried to assault in a different way and that he let her take food away from him, but they never discussed it either. All of this food that she took away from him, she shared with Dita. This was not the only sexual barter in which the two girls exchanged in the camp. Before in Dessauer Ufer, the Jewish women were accommodated on one floor of a building in the harbor, and on a different floor, Italian POWs were accommodated.

- 30:41 Dr. Anna Hájková: Many of the women had an admirer or a boyfriend or a partner in sexual barter with whom they met, and one of them was also Dita. At night she would sneak out and go into the basement where people could meet, and Margot stood guard with them. It is not quite clear what the two of them did, but Margot believes that the two of them had sex and then Dita would come back with food that she shared with Margot. As an old lady, Dita recalled her wartime story. She recalled this encounter as a romantic support of a nice stranger who helped her because she needed help. The same story Margot recalled to me, I don't think she was in love with him. She did it for food. This food, as I mentioned, she brought to Margot. So, what I want to invite you here to do is to not automatically see these things as a kind of romantic support of a girl in need, as kind of this damsel in distress, and we do not only take it as sexual barter, that we have this very contrasting narratives. It is quite obvious that Margot kind of dismisses her. The Italian man is somebody with whom her girlfriend only exchange sex in exchange for food. We also see why Dita told the story differently. I do not want to say how it really was, but I wanted to share with you these contrasting narratives. With that, I come to a conclusion and I have four points to make.
- 32:19 Dr. Anna Hájková: First, men ate the food that their female relatives exchange for sexual barter and then judged their wives, daughters, and sisters who got it for them in such a way. Rather than engaging in the same, we need to understand where that judgment is coming from and not apply aphoristic mind to our understanding of sexual barter. It's also quite striking that while much of the stigma of sexual barter comes from male testimonies, but not only from that. We should pay attention that men bartering sex is largely much less stigmatized. Second, we need to think about context, of the value of payment, value of payment which leads us to quite a hard topic of dignity and mentality of the perpetrator, the client, the [unclear]. I kind of already spelled it out with, with Alice Haberland, this scrap of food is not just a scrap of food. A loaf of bread in a concentration camp is a very valuable thing. So, we need to think about the value or the counter value if somebody takes someone into hiding and hides them for a week, for a month, for a year. This is not a small thing and some people put their life into danger and also put the life upside down.
- 33:39 Dr. Anna Hájková: Some of situations, and I'm talking here still about counter value, are even more difficult. Omer Bartov draws our attention to moments in Buczacz ghetto where gentile men would come in, pick attractive-looking women for rescue, have sex with them and when they fell pregnant, throw them out. So you have moments when the counter value doesn't come through and then you don't have sexual barter. What I think about all of these contexts, it draws my, I would contextualize it with the recite of Olwen Hufton - another important historian of the poor and 18th century - which he called the economies of the makeshift. It's poor

women's participation of the economics of makeshift is an acquired art, a learned sets of responses to economic crisis and chronic unemployment, in which they sell food or clean or do something else, and sometimes also sell sex.

- 34:36 Dr. Anna Hájková: Three - I still want to say something about stigma and how incredibly important it is that we do not take it on board. But that rather than throwing it out of the window, I believe our job is to address it as a topic in its own right. People who sold sex, particularly women but not only, they're marked as deviant. And as such, largely they are not able to bear testimony. This is really important, even existential, for local survivors because bearing testimony was such an important moment of agency after the war, but also was a really key moment of being a citizen of the history after undergoing genocide. It's really important to think so carefully about the language we are using as the strength of the sexual barter in the Holocaust. We carry a responsibility to analyze stigma but also deconstruct it. You will see how I strove talking about Eva Preissová as a woman who choose to engage in sexual contact with a range of men. This is not the language that Anna Kovanicová used about her. Finally, what you will find in scholarship quite often is a bit of a kind of moralizing counterpoint of these men and also often men who buy these sexual services is he should have given her the food without any counter value. Yes, that's philosophically correct, I guess. But it kind of misses the whole world of the concentration camps and rescue, and it's ahistorical.
- 36:15 Dr. Anna Hájková: What I do with sexual barter and what I think we should do with sexual barter, is historicizing sexual barter to understand the mentality and society of the camps, and not to kind of insist on some ahistorical, philosophical points that do not help us understand how society works. In effect, when we look at historicizing sexual barter in the concentration camps, it helps us understand what is seen as descent, and what are the leeways, and what is the agency of these people. Therefore, I have always used sexual barter to kind of, as a point to critique these choiceless choices, a concept that builds on Lawrence Langer, in which choices of the Holocaust victims ought not to be taken seriously because they were shorn of dignity. Now, Langer wrote about situations and annihilation camps where people's leeway is even more limited. But his notion of choiceless choices has kind of become a bit of automatic runner-off. So, let me take it to make one more plea that we need to take the agency of the bartering parity seriously. Thank you, and let me end on a note of my favorite witness.
- 37:32 Susanne Hillman: Thank you very much Anna for a very thought-provoking talk. And so, we have a few questions. Just for the audience, we take more questions. The first one was raised by Mitchell. Is it naive to believe the Nazis followed the code that forbid them from having sex with Jews?
- 37:54 Dr. Anna Hájková: Yes, it is naive. Thank you so much for this question. There is a wealth of scholarship on this topic from Regina Mühlhäuser whose book just came out in English translation with Edinburgh University Press as *Sex and the Nazi Soldier*. The book is not completely affordable, but maybe the university library at San Diego can purchase the book and read the book. It's amazing, Regina is amazing. Invite Regina, use the Zoom time. The pandemic is horrible, but at least you can bring people from around the world. Maybe you don't have to bring her at 1:00 AM. She's not as mad as I am. Regina Mühlhäuser is one of the eminent scholars who has looked at how the the rassenschande, racial affiliation, played out in practice. She

shows how more to the far to the east, the less the Nuremberg laws were taken seriously. So, I just want to, there's a lot of scholarship on this. People like Helena Sinnreich, others have written on this topic. But I just want to say one more thing about Regina Mühlhäuser. She pointed out to the fact that many instances of sexual violence did not include penile rape and therefore were not technically prosecutable under Nuremberg laws. Also, Nuremberg Laws were not quite so often prosecuted.

- 39:19 Susanne Hillman: Thank you, Anna. Another question by Deborah. Can you identify other sorts of barter that occurred? Barter that was also frowned upon or accepted.
- 39:33 Dr. Anna Hájková: That's a good question. I mean, this is why, I mean I didn't just very briefly [Marie] Jalowicz Simon, how she shows the many forms of barter that it took to someone to take into hiding. Susanna Schrafstetter and her beautiful study on a Munich Jews in hiding shows that a hiding often was a business and people pay for it. And then there were also examples of the Judenfeind, people who took from Jews all the money that they had and when these Jewish [unclear] had nothing more to give, they will chuck them out on the street or worse yet, even denounced them to the Gestapo. You do not have really a moment of counter value. You have people who, what is often asked of them to be always pleasant. Some of the things that I am interested in, and the work that I'm doing currently in an article is how when we look at hiding as an interaction. How it's something that a priory corrupts social interactions. Because when somebody does you a favor, you say thank you and maybe you send them a bottle of wine and then you are quit or, you know, I ask Susanne to send me scan. I say, thank you. Then she asked me next month to send her a scan and I do it and we are done. But it's not like I move into her house and say, you know, we have the pandemic in Britain and things are horrible and please put me up here because, you know, for a week I would be nice and maybe mow the lawn. But would I not be hassle after that? Yes, I would be hassle, and Susanne will be nice and put up with me. But this already, this example that is a little bit, I guess, absurd. I like to use these absurd examples because it draws our attention to how these moments kind of start corrupting this network social interactions. When somebody does you this immense favor, how hard it is to say, no, I will not do this to you. I will not wash your floors. I will not babysit your children. I will not eat less breakfast and I will not have sex with you. So this is the circumspect response to go to these many many barter moments. I would also encourage you, if you have access, do read Marie Jalowicz Simon, I think in the US, you should be able to buy it on Kindle or maybe the book could come out in the US. It's also very beautifully written memoir.
- 42:02 Susanne Hillman: Thank you.
- 42:03 Dr. Anna Hájková: Susanne, I will not move in with you, don't worry.
- 42:05 Susanne Hillman: Oh, I'm not worried. I'm not worried at all. Another question, one guest asked, do you consider agency as a fixed trait or is it more a process according to the situations you find yourself in?
- 42:03 Dr. Anna Hájková: It's a process, and that's actually a great point. I will take it on board. I mean, one of the things that I want to do when I have time is to sit down and read more theory and I do it kind of as I go. So, if the person asking this question has time and inclination and could email me maybe some readings about how to conceptualize agency as a process that would be much appreciated. And I also write

it down.

- 42:51 Susanne Hillman: If you can, the person who asked question, you can reach out to me and I will get you in touch with Anna. That should work. Another question Pamela is asking if we find that Lawrence Langer's concept of a choiceless choices problematic if we reject that language, is there other language we can use to describe these circumscribed or constrained circumstances?
- 43:23 Dr. Anna Hájková: In a way, we really still live in the kind of aftermath of choiceless choices, in a way Primo Levi's *[The] Grey Zone*, operates for something similar. You may call me a bit of a pessimist, but as I work in the British Neo-liberal University landscape, I do not think we live in a world in which we have a whole lot of choices. We operate in these extremely circumvented leeways where we cannot really do what we want. We just try to do the best out of difficult situations. I mean, look at the University in the age of COVID in which we have to teach more, and be available more, and do better, and still publish and do things, and try to be good colleagues. Of course, we are not in a concentration camp. But I think if you take a good hard look at any society, we see how incredibly circumvented choices are. This is what I learned from reading Judith Walkowitz, Mary [unclear], or Julia [unclear] on sex work. Many of these instances are very limited and quite violent and these men and women who engaged in sex work consistently tried to look for the best choices. Therefore, if I can pick a hill on which I will die, it has been my endeavor to place the Holocaust as a version of a society and not a deviance.
- 44:57 Susanne Hillman: Another question. Arthur asks, how prevalent was sexual barter? And this guest is actually guessing that mostly it was practiced by attractive women and only a few.
- 45:15 Dr. Anna Hájková: So Arthur, yes and no. I think when you start looking at sexual barter, you start guessing it, that it was actually quite prevalent. And what I find so helpful at this concept, and this is also why insisted in the beginning, we need to get away from the assumption that sexual barter always includes sexual acts. It can be flirting. It can be kind of promising to go someone and being nice to them or to go on a date. It is something that is the fabric of society, of the concentration camps in my micro-history of Neugraben [sub-camp], and that is, by the way, how it Susanne and I met each other because our work interlinked her on the Dinah Gottlieb and Willy Brachmann - you see how many women in this satellite camp of Neugraben of Neuengamme engage in various forms of sexual barter. And when you kind of start following one concentration camp very closely, you see how many prisoners use it as a way of negotiating the everyday, but also how the civilians, how the POWs, how the forced laborers in the camp next door, all go to these women who are emaciated, whose hair has been cut short, who wear uniforms, who cannot wash properly, sometimes suffer from enteritis so they smell of excrement, and consistently offer them food in exchange for sex. So after this, I would really, as a classical historian of everyday life, I would encourage us to take micro-histories quite importantly, because studying something in great detail, will help us understand this society of the Holocaust in a bigger detail. The assumption that only women who are perceived as attractive can sell sex, I think, kind of misses the point of society. A lot of people sell sex, whether they are perceived as attractive or not. I mean, just look at any of the activists of sex work, whether they're attractive or not.

- 47:26 Susanne Hillman: Okay. I think that concludes our events. These are very good questions. Thank you so much, Anna, I hope in the hopefully nearish future we can welcome you in person. But for now, it was great that you spent the very early morning with us. I would like to thank everybody for being here. I wish you a good night. Thank you.
- 47:52 Dr. Anna Hájková: Bye-bye.
- 47:58 [Read Write Think Dream / The Library UC San Diego Channel / www.uctv.tv/library-channel]
- 48:02 [Sexual Barter in the Times of Genocide: Reflections on Sexual Violence, Agency, and Sex Work / Featuring / Anna Hájková, University of Warwick, Associate Professor, Modern Continental European History / February 17, 2021]
- 48:06 [Presented by / The Holocaust Living History Workshop / Deborah Hertz, Director, The Jewish Studies Program, UC San Diego / Susanne Hillman, Program Coordinator, The Holocaust Living History Workshop / UC San Diego Library / Erik T. Mitchell, The Audrey Geisel University Librarian / Nikki Kolupailo, Director of Communications and Engagement]
- 48:11 [UCTV / Producer, Lynn Burnstan / Production, Marci Betts, John Menier / Editor, Marci Betts]
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