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New York Today: Lasting Lessons From the Holocaust



The Museum of Jewish Heritage in Battery Park.
Credit Karsten Moran for The New York Times

By Alexandra S. Levine

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Good morning on this calm Thursday.

It's Yom HaShoah — Holocaust Remembrance Day.

There are commemorations at the Museum of Jewish Heritage, where visitors can [hear survivors' stories](#), and at the [J.C.C. Manhattan](#), among other places.

But some New Yorkers journey overseas to reflect on the Holocaust's legacy.

[Fellowships at Auschwitz for the Study of Professional Ethics](#), an academic program based in Midtown, takes students and young professionals to Germany and Poland to explore how lessons from the Holocaust remain relevant to their fields.

A few who participated from 2012 to 2016 shared their thoughts. (I, too, have taken part in the program.)

Carla Pierini, a corporate lawyer in New York, said, "It's the role that lawyers *didn't* play in the Holocaust that was the problem," noting that many in the legal profession chose not to resist Nazi policies in order to keep their jobs.

"As individuals practicing law — policymakers, lawyers and judges — silence is the most dangerous, especially when civil liberties and democracies are threatened," she said.

Dhruv Khullar, a physician at NewYork-Presbyterian Hospital, pointed to Holocaust-era doctors who justified killing the disabled in the name of public health. He said his studies "reframed the way that I approach my job in a hospital day to day."

"It's very easy, sometimes, for us to think that certain types of lives are not worth living if people aren't able to do certain things or interact with the world in the way that we do," added Dr. Khullar, who also [writes for The New York Times](#). "But one thing this really drove home to me is that every life has worth."

Brian Hathaway, a doctoral student in business ethics at the Wharton School, said he was struck by the industrialized aspects of the Holocaust.

"A lot of what you would look for in terms of the modern business — efficiency, logistics, things like that — those were part of what made the Holocaust so devastatingly broad in scope," he said. "In many cases, business played a direct role."

Cornelia Dalton, a rabbinical student in New York, saw some of the same damaging silence in her field that Ms. Pierini saw in lawyers.

"One of the connections that I saw in the role of the clergy was this reluctance to speak, this fear of crossing some sort of boundary," she said. "I think that's still very present today — whether that's talking about U.S. politics or the Middle East."