

# Battle Creek project looks back at Holocaust, contemporary antisemitism



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Battle Creek Enquirer

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When Margaret Lincoln became the librarian for Lakeview schools nearly five decades ago, she noticed the district was lacking in its literature about the Holocaust.

"There were maybe one or two books in Lakeview High School library, partly because the literature had not yet been created," she said. "Over the years, we built that up."

Lincoln, who is Jewish, said educating others about the Holocaust – or Nazi Germany's mass murder of European Jews before and during World War II – is something she's long been "very passionate about."

Thanks to her continued activism, the Battle Creek community is invited to take part in a series of events for a project titled, "Remembrance in Action: Responding to the Holocaust in Today's World."

The project aims to look at both historical and contemporary acts of antisemitism through exhibits at the Art Center of Battle Creek, a professional development workshop for local educators, a Willard Library live-streamed discussion of Holocaust era newspaper coverage, and an opening reception for the art exhibits that coincides with the premiere of the new documentary series by Ken Burns, Lynn Novick and Sarah Botstein, "The U.S. and the Holocaust."

"If we do not take a stand and say that antisemitism was wrong then... and it is wrong now when it rears its ugly head, then we haven't done the right thing," Lincoln said. "I'm glad that at least we can combine all these different threads, the exhibits and Ken Burns, give that to Battle Creek and have an impact."

The year 2021 saw a record 2,717 antisemitic incidents across the United States, up 34% from 2020 according to the Anti Defamation League's [annual](#)

audit. Most of these were incidents of harassment against Jewish Americans, but assaults and antisemitic vandalism also spiked last year.

Lincoln noted there have been public acts of antisemitism in Battle Creek in recent years. The Jewish synagogue Temple Beth El was vandalized in 2018 and 2019, and a Nazi flag was raised at Riverside Elementary in 2019.

Funding for the "Remembrance in Action" project comes from a Ravitz Foundation Initiative for Small Jewish Communities grant awarded to Temple Beth El, with additional support from the Detroit Jewish News Foundation, the Tree of Life Synagogue and the Jewish Federation of Kalamazoo and Southwest Michigan.



This mosaic created by Shelley Jaffe of Royal Oak, Mich. shows the Pittsburgh skyline, created in response to the 2018 attack on the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh. *Provided*

In support of the art exhibits, the Michigan Anti-Defamation League and the Zekelman Holocaust Center provided local educators with a free afterschool professional development session on Monday in which they explored ways to support students' commitment and ability to actively respond to and prevent antisemitism and other forms of prejudice, hate and bigotry in the community.

At 7 p.m. on Thursday, Willard Library will livestream its "Peeks Into the Past" episode discussing "The Holocaust Unfolds" with host Michael McCullough and Lincoln, former Lakeview High School teacher Scott Durham and Detroit News Foundation archivist Mike Smith as guests.



Historic newspaper clippings hung as part of the Remembrance in Action project at the Art Center of Battle Creek on Friday, Sep. 10, 2022. *Becca Mahon/Battle Creek Enquirer*

The traveling exhibit "From Darkness to Light: Mosaics Inspired by Tragedy" is now at the Art Center of Battle Creek through Oct. 31. On display are metallic replicas of glass mosaics, created by 18 artists in response to the 2018 terrorist attack at the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh that killed 11 people. Also on display is "The Holocaust Unfolds" from the Detroit Jewish News Foundation, featuring World War II-era reports from the Detroit Jewish Chronicle and Detroit Jewish News. The newspaper publications have been enlarged for display and summarized through labels.

The Art Center is hosting an opening reception for both exhibits at 1 p.m. Sunday, coinciding with the premiere of the PBS documentary series, "The U.S. and the Holocaust."

"Viewing art is very personal. But a lot of artists use art because they can't find another way to express what they're feeling, but you can put it on paper or in this case, in mosaics," said Linda Holderbaum, Art Center's executive director. "It's a very personal thing. They may be enlightened, they may be saddened, they may be inspired to create their own thing. In combining the art with the history – this is what happened to these people, let's not let this happen again."

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