



Home > Commentary

January 27, 2023 05:45 AM | UPDATED 4 HOURS AGO

# Commentary: International Holocaust Remembrance Day reminds us of individual, corporate responsibility

Eli Mayerfeld

 EMAIL  SHARE  TWEET  SHARE

Less than two weeks after commemorating the life and legacy of the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a lesser-known commemoration takes place; on January 27, the world marks International Holocaust Remembrance Day.



Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld is CEO of The Zekelman Holocaust Center.

The lessons we as Michiganders and as Americans must learn from that terrible time in human history are today thrown into sharp relief. Jews are being verbally and physically attacked in our own backyards, most recently in the Dec. 2 antisemitic incident at Temple Beth El in Bloomfield Hills. Our heightened security is matched only by our heightened sense of anxiety. Who will be targeted next? Will there be physical violence? Are Jews in America safe?

At The Zekelman Holocaust Center, we believe that businesses have an important role to play in creating a safer and better world, one free of antisemitism and all prejudice. The diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) movement must lead this important effort. In a new Skillsoft survey of 1,000 professionals, 72 percent of respondents reported that corporate social responsibility has become more important since the pandemic – 40 percent said that "doing the right thing" guides their efforts.

We are assisting companies with their corporate social responsibility and DEI initiatives. In the last few months, nearly 1,000 business professionals have participated in museum tours, education programs and virtual museum experiences at The Holocaust Center. Corporate education makes up almost a quarter of our adult education programs.



Visiting business leaders to The Holocaust Center learn that the darkness that descended over Europe during WWII was a result of everyday choices made at every level of society. They learn how business leaders themselves were complicit during the Holocaust. Many corporations profited off the murder of innocent people, while high percentages of individual business professionals were bystanders, failing to help their fellow coworkers. Some major corporations helped the perpetrators, by benefiting from the slave labor of Jews and other victims of Nazi racist

ideology, producing the materials and machines used in the killing centers as well as in the greater war.

Despite this, a few courageous business leaders and professionals chose to defy the Nazis by defending their Jewish employees and colleagues, helping them escape captivity and extermination. The Spielberg movie "Schindler's List" is a dramatization of one such effort.

Education is society's best safeguard against hatred. Many influential people working in the realms of politics, culture and economics espouse strong antisemitic beliefs, exploiting their audience's ignorance. Recent examples include professional athletes citing films denying the Holocaust happened; media personalities who promote the canard that Jews are "replacing" the white race; and politicians and musicians who recycle tropes about Jews' outsize influence, normalizing antisemitism and hate.

We encourage businesses, places of learning, and law enforcement to schedule a tour at The Holocaust Center. Come and be inspired by the study of Holocaust history to become upstanders today, to take responsibility for business practices and create institutional cultures that value and celebrate diversity and inclusion.

– *Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld is CEO of The Zekelman Holocaust Center*

## RECOMMENDED FOR YOU

---

Six months ago, I took my Ford Focus for a simple repair. I haven't driven it since.

---

Mike Shirkey: Right-to-Work got the job done, brought jobs to Michigan

---

Commentary: Buckle in for more supply chain hardships, partnerships in 2023

---

Sponsored Content: Caring for Kids: Working to make the biggest impact to help Michigan kids and their families

---



Copyright © 1996-2023. Crain Communications, Inc. All Rights Reserved.