

Utah professor to discuss parallels of Holocaust, modern-day bystanders

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FARMINGTON HILLS — University of Utah law professor Amos N. Guiora has one message for bystanders in today's political climate: Don't be passive.

Guiora will speak at the Holocaust Memorial Center Sept. 10 in a presentation called "Bystanders' Role Now and During the Holocaust," which will explore the similarities between bystanders during the Holocaust and at recent violent events in Charlottesville, Virginia.

On Aug. 12, white nationalists protesting the removal of a statue of Confederate Gen. Robert E. Lee on a college campus clashed with counter-protesters. One of the participants in the white nationalist protest reportedly responded by plowing his car into a group of counter-protesters, killing one — Heather Heyer, 32 — and injuring more than a dozen others. Two police officers who were heading to the scene in a helicopter to help in the chaos died after their helicopter crashed.

Guiora will pull lessons from the Holocaust — including the death marches and the German occupation of Holland and Hungary — and how bystander nonintervention fanned the flames of injustice, as well as his own family's experiences.

He also will reportedly bring the focus to today's world, providing examples of sexual assaults on college campuses and other crimes where bystanders chose whether or not to act, according to a press release.

Guiora's most recent book, "The Crime of Complicity: The Bystander in the Holocaust" — which will be available during a book signing after the presentation — was written within a span of about four or five years, and its timing is more crucial than ever, he said.

"The (reason) for writing the book was to examine, to honor, my parents' Holocaust experiences and the role of a bystander in their experiences," Guiora said in a phone interview. "Thinking about contemporary society could be the most relevant thing I could discuss."

He added that the complicity of bystanders has be-

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come a “very complicated paradigm.”

HMC CEO Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld said in a press release that there are some poignant questions and topics that Guiora will address.

“The comparisons to the bystanders of today to those who stood idly by during the Holocaust are striking. This will be a thought-provoking, moving discussion, and we are honored to have professor Guiora speak at the Holocaust Memorial Center,” Mayerfeld said.

Guiora said that to him, a bystander during the Holocaust was an

individual standing in the streets, doing nothing.

“Seeing, in my mother’s case ... a 12-year-old Jewish child running from place to place hiding and (not doing) a damn thing,” Guiora said, adding that other bystanders are like those who saw his father on a death march.

“The bystanders, the villagers, who see a group of Jews ... clearly in distress and chooses not (to) do anything — that is a bystander.”

Guiora said that he cannot say how many people might have been saved from the Holocaust had bystanders spoken up, but the death toll would not have been 6 million murdered, including his grandparents.

“They were murdered in Aus-

chwitz,” he said, adding that he does not feel that America is headed in that direction now, but the country needs to be careful.

“I think that we need to be wary of, and alert to, the rise of hate and racism, which has a potential to lead to violence,” he said.

According to the release, Guiora, a native of Israel, is a widely cited expert and author on the legal aspects of counterterrorism and international law.

Admission costs \$10, or \$5 for HMC members and college students. To RSVP, contact Laura Williams at (248) 536-9605 or email rsvp@holocaustcenter.org.

Staff Writer K. Michelle Moran contributed to this report.