A willingness to provide leadership, to seek private funds, and to interest colleagues to participate constitute critical elements in establishing a teaching institute to explore a significant historical issue. With good fortune, the results of an institute might have impressive long-term consequences. A teacher from Alabama, having recently completed the Holocaust Institute at Florida State University (FSU) concluded, “I came away with a deeper appreciation of historical events that lead to major world-shattering events. I have also made a personal commitment to concentrate on emphasizing tolerance as I teach, because of what I learned here this week.” A north Florida teacher found that, “This past week was the most valuable, informative, and heart-wrenching experience I have had in 24 years of teaching. I learned more information in a week than I ever thought possible.”

This essay relates how a professor of social studies education and a professor of history, both at FSU, began a successful historical institute that has now completed its seventh year. Although this discussion is not intended as a blueprint, our successes and setbacks could provide insights and ideas for those who desire to expand their teaching, explore various subjects, or bring together local scholars presenting varied perspectives on an important issue.

During the summer of 1994, Florida State University held its first Holocaust Institute for Educators, primarily for middle and secondary school teachers. Six months before this event, the president of the Tallahassee Federation of Jewish Charities asked the chair of the FSU History Department if the university could organize such an institute for teachers. The request followed the publication of a national Roper poll indicating that secondary school students had very little knowledge of the Holocaust. Although some aspects of this survey were poorly constructed and of questionable value (particularly the questions dealing with Holocaust denial), even the survey’s critics agreed that the poll illustrated enormous ignorance of the Holocaust. Shortly after the Federation of Jewish Charities requested establishment of the institute, the Florida Legislature made the teaching of the Holocaust mandatory in public schools, but did not provide any funds to prepare teachers in the subject. The

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1 Student evaluation of the Florida State University Holocaust Institute for Educators, FSU Center for Professional Development, Holocaust Institute files, hereafter cited as CPD file.

Institute founders asked FSU to establish a summer program examining the German onslaught against European Jewry from 1935 to 1945. The Institute would grant students either academic credit or continuing education credit that would apply toward teacher certification. Moreover, we made clear our intention to seek grants and private donors to finance the Institute, thus not financially burdening the university. With very few university procedures and requirements to fulfill, the FSU administration approved the Institute.3

The Institute directors outlined a program of presentations, workshops, and other events to cover a seven-day period in late June, when Florida public teachers were free for full-time study. Each year the Institute opens with a Sunday reception, followed with a presentation by a nationally prominent figure. Weekday programs begin at approximately 8:00 a.m. and end at approximately 9:30 p.m. A half-day Saturday class completes the sessions.

The Institute has two major goals, the first of which is to help teachers effectively present the Holocaust to students and to have our participants understand the historical record, such as the background of the Holocaust, what actually occurred, and why events unfolded as they did. In the mornings and early afternoons, speakers examine subjects such as the evolution of Nazi anti-Jewish policies, the history of German ideas related to anti-Semitism, economics and the role of business as an aspect of Nazi policy, the role and lack of role of bystanders and protesters, the social-psychological perspective on acceptance of authority, Jewish life in central and eastern Europe before the Holocaust, and the general patterns of destruction in the Jewish community throughout Europe. In addition, a number of sessions focus on different countries and their response to Nazi control. Germany and Austria, Vichy France, Poland, Italy, Romania, Hungary, the Netherlands, and the occupied areas of the USSR receive separate examination. The social history of the concentration and death camps, Jewish resistance in the ghettos, camps and countryside, and the role of the U.S. State Department receive attention as well. A social psychologist presents two sessions, one examining conformity and obedience to authority and the other the promotion of intergroup tolerance and cooperation. There have been yearly variations in this program, but the above description generally has remained the Institute’s approach.

Two considerations determined what subjects would be explored. A core of sessions examine standard themes in the study of the Holocaust, such as Nazi anti-Jewish measures in Germany or the death camps. This traditional material is necessary for teachers with little background in the subject. Additional topics reflect the interests of the Institute faculty. Limited funds mean having primarily local faculty as

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3The FSU Center for Professional Development agreed to oversee Institute advertising and administration of non-academic routine, provide equipment and meeting rooms, and help with fund raising. The Institute paid CPD for these services.
presenters. However, we orient our sessions to their strengths, although their interests often deviate from the most commonly taught areas. This has worked out well. Some of these sessions, for example, focus purely on the events in Italy or Romania; those sessions were often cited as the most insightful in evaluations. Examining less typically explored topics results in the most knowledgeable of the students/teachers acquiring information that supplements their previous study.

Likewise, including as a presenter, a social psychologist with historical knowledge and formidable methodological skills, introduces ideas that avoid simple pop-psychology explanations and instead inspires discussions on empirical evidence and sound experimental studies. This also provides new insights to both teachers experienced in teaching the Holocaust and novices.

In evening sessions additional historical material is presented in a variety of settings. Evenings typically involve discussions built around documentary films, a "what is Judaism" program, and sessions with Holocaust survivors. On Friday evening, we encourage Institute participants to attend services at one of the two synagogues in the area. The Institute arranges transportation, if necessary, and the congregations are informed that the Institute visitors will be in attendance. Although no one is required to attend Jewish services, this aspect of the program has been a great success. This visit, as well as learning about Judaism in our "what is Judaism" session, might have had an especially important impact among our students who primarily came from north Florida, southern Georgia, and Alabama and have had little contact with Jewish culture.

The Institute has been judged highly successful, based on positive evaluations by student/teacher participants, highly complimentary judgments by official examiners of the Florida Humanities Council, the winning of the FSU President’s Continuing Education Award in 1994, and the receipt of two major national awards from the University Continuing Education Association in 1998. Nevertheless, the Institute has faced numerous problems. Some arose from the subject matter itself. At the outset, the Institute leadership had to decide whether the focus would be solely on the destruction of European Jewry, include other major Nazi victims who suffered a similar fate, or have sessions devoted to genocide in general. Initially we took the position that the Institute focus would be on European Jewry alone for a number of reasons: The Nazis killed Jews at a much higher percentage than any other group; they designed specific plans to destroy all the European Jews; they had, in the case of the Jews alone, destroyed an entire civilization, the Jewish culture of Eastern Europe; and they set aside even resources critical to German military needs in order to continue murdering Jews. In the last weeks of the war, killing Jews became such a priority that other victims were temporarily ignored in comparison. Thus, Institute policy held the position that the destruction of European Jewry was unique, whether compared to that of other ethnic groups destroyed during World War II or genocide committed at other
time periods with other peoples. Then, at the end of the third year we completely reversed ourselves on this issue.

Although our course continued to emphasize the destruction of European Jewry, our focus became more inclusive. As speakers with various perspectives provided additional insight, we concluded that the Institute distorted history if it did not include Nazi destruction of three million Roman Catholic Poles, the killing of Gypsies, attacks on homosexuals, murder of Russian POWs, and the partial destruction of other Nazi targets. To include only European Jewry gave the erroneous impression that the Jews alone were significantly victimized and, therefore, implied that perhaps aspects of Jewish culture triggered their fate. Although Hitler and the Nazi leadership victimized the Jews early in the process (along with German antifascist elements), numerous others followed close behind. To study one segment without examining the interconnections with the whole limited the understanding of the Holocaust.

Since the 1998 programs we have devoted a session to “the other Holocaust,” an examination of the planned enslavement and annihilation of non-Jewish victims of Nazi oppression. We also asked other speakers to include non-Jewish Nazi targets, when applicable to their subject matter. Our survivors’ sessions are now planned to go beyond the Jewish experience. Beginning with the 1997 Institute, we placed greater emphasis on the attacks German allies and semi-independent subordinate states carried out, at their own volition, against various ethnic cultures. Still focusing on Jewish destruction, the Institute thus evolved toward more inclusion. This led to other problems.

During the 1997 program the featured outside speaker at the Institute’s Sunday reception, which was open to the public, examined the death rate of Polish children, both Jews and Catholics. Some of his talk also dealt with the Nazi killing, internment, and exceptionally hostile treatment of Polish Catholics, as compared to other nationalities, which, the speaker argued, Holocaust scholars had largely ignored.

The audience consisted of university faculty from fields related to the Holocaust, school teachers who constituted the students of the Institute, and numerous people from the Jewish community, many of whom were Institute donors. This third group included children of Holocaust survivors, several were survivors themselves, and others were Jewish organizational leaders. Many in the audience responded negatively when the speaker challenged traditional interpretations and criticized Elie Wiesel (one of the Institute’s outside speakers the previous year). Although the speaker took a common academic position in attempting to modify points of view that have long been accepted, many of the lay audience considered this, as one person stated in a letter to the Chairman of the Florida Board of Regents, a “very transparent anti-Semitic personal agenda that he [the speaker] demonstrated by discrediting and diminishing the
Jewish tragedy of the Holocaust. Ironically, the emotional aspect of the discussion during that program might have had a positive impact on subsequent sessions with the secondary school teachers, who immediately became aware that these "historical issues" remained current passionate controversies.

Another issue arose from the student evaluations of the Institute. Should the Institute address the concept of "Jewishness," what it means to be Jewish, and what Judaism represents as a religion? When this question first surfaced, the Institute directors rejected providing some of the Institute's very limited class time to this complicated issue. We also took this position because what constituted being Jewish in Nazi-controlled Europe had nothing to do with Judaism or Jewish culture. In Germany and in territory under direct German control, German law defined being Jewish in terms of current family or past family identification, assuming a genetic or biological basis. Nevertheless, the student/teacher participants, both verbally and in written evaluations, continued every year to press for a session on Judaism. Our students clearly believed this was important. Therefore, beginning in 1997 the Institute included an evening devoted to understanding Jewish culture and religion. The Institute participants, judging by subsequent evaluations, believed they benefitted because teaching about the Holocaust in areas having few, if any, Jews, resulted in their students asking questions related to Jewish culture and religion. Although our Judaism session hardly made our participants experts, they were provided with a foundation to respond to these questions.

In addition, questions arose concerning the sensitivity of a presenter who examined subjects that some considered unpleasant or unflattering regarding Jewish-staffed institutions the Nazis created. Did Jewish Councils, dictatorial Jewish Council presidents, Jewish ghetto police, Jewish concentration camp barracks leaders and camp police act primarily in self interest or to enhance Jewish survival? Some of his descriptions of Jewish Council heads, for example, were highly negative. Does the need to seek the truth overshadow risking being insensitive in one's conclusions? Institute policy chose inclusion and accuracy over possible insensitivity.

The second key point of the Institute's mission is to provide direction and examples for integrating Holocaust material into the school curriculum in history, social studies, English, the arts, and humanities. Participants are engaged for half of each day in discussion of lecture material, discussion of the broad concepts of the Holocaust, and in reading and enacting lesson plans. Initially, the discussions and role playing all took place after group luncheons, but participants found they had no time to process and digest one morning lecture before the next one started, and they experienced a serious overload of information. We rearranged the schedule to allow an hour of discussion before lunch, and moved one lecture each day to the hour.

\[4\text{CPD file.}\]
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immediately following lunch. The remainder of the afternoon is spent developing practical applications of the material for each participant’s classroom needs.

The first afternoon session engages teachers in activities designed to elicit a rationale for studying the Holocaust. After examining the Florida Statute, Evelyn B. Holt’s article “Remember Our Faces—Teaching About the Holocaust,” and “Guidelines for Teaching the Holocaust” published by the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., teachers write a rationale that fits their particular students’ profile and their teaching situation.5 This activity grounds the following week’s work in the larger mandates of the national and state focus, and begins the process of applying the goals of the course to the specific demands of each teacher’s classroom.

The variety of uses for the material shapes discussions that follow. The Institute is designed to appeal to secondary-level educators, but each year elementary and middle school teachers and instructors from community colleges also attend. The state mandate seeks to incorporate the material into the humanities and social studies, but English and art teachers attend as well. Placing the larger concepts of the Holocaust in the multitude of appropriate contexts is one strength of the program. Grouping the participants for discussion of the state grade and subject standards according to the grade level they teach and then regrouping them in mixed grade levels results in clearer perceptions of how any one teacher’s lessons fit into the whole picture of the students’ formal education, by grade and subject. The discussion has always included commentary on the appropriateness of presenting certain material to younger children (such as photographs of victims) and the culture of violence surrounding students today.

Examining the breadth of application of Holocaust concepts leads naturally into discussion and identification of specific themes each teacher will want to develop. One constraint on the uses of the material is the time the teacher has to devote to the subject. A few teachers have the luxury of an entire semester to explore the Holocaust fully, but most rearrange an already crowded schedule to spend a week or two on complexities that baffle scholars and psychiatrists alike. The need to help the overloaded teacher is addressed through two approaches: first, showing them how to seek help from other domains, in this case often the English and art teachers, and team teaching one or more units on compatible subjects; and, second, identifying the concepts that recur in world and United States history that are particularly apropos to the Holocaust and showing teachers how to introduce them as they occur throughout the semester, thus readying students for the specific application of those patterns and

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themes to the developments of the Holocaust. Concepts of prejudice, discrimination, genocide, enslavement, nationalism, patriotism, race, and the politics of religion shaped historical events long before the actions of the Nazis. Locating the Holocaust on a variety of time lines, both short-term and in the longer sweep of history, also helps students understand how a horror of such magnitude could happen. From here, teachers are asked to define the Holocaust, for themselves and their students, and to recognize that the events have different definitions for different groups and individuals. They are encouraged to read Ervin Staub’s *The Roots of Evil* for analytical models of genocide.⁶

Faced with a board full of words such as “race” and “prejudice,” many public school teachers will recognize the potential for confusion, reaction, and rejection by students and by some parents. The Holocaust presents special issues that transcend the purely historical perspective. The afternoon curriculum integration sessions give more attention to the contemporary social implications of the Holocaust than the morning or evening meetings. The next discussions center on teaching controversial material, with a review of appropriate state and county guidelines. Teachers are encouraged to have the state guidelines handy, and to have fully prepared units ready for parental and administrative inspection, using materials prepared by accredited sources. Preparing parents with a letter explaining that social studies classes examine topics and events that were controversial when they happened in the past and continue to generate debate today is one way of keeping communications open and avoiding confrontations. Leading students through exploration of the differences between fact and opinion, the significance of nuance, and the need for politeness in advance of controversial discussions and having a prearranged plan for cutting off rancorous argument, such as switching from oral debate to journal writing, are typical methods teachers use for coping with controversy. Finally, teachers can consider three levels of exploration and choose the depth that best suits their situation. The first stage of inquiry, corresponding to the lowest step of Bloom’s Taxonomy, is the fact-finding level, where the teacher leads students to collect “just the facts” of when and where the Holocaust happened, who was killed, and the magnitude of the crime. The next level is to show students that the history of genocide is not Germany’s alone, but also a part of American history, of the collective “we” of the classroom. The ultimate challenge is to open students’ eyes to their own prejudices and to have them recognize their own biases. To succeed, the teacher must be willing to do the same self-examination expected of students. It requires a classroom atmosphere of mutual trust and respect, and it is undoubtedly safer to teach in the lower levels of comprehension.

In addition to discussions about teaching, teachers are given a huge array of lesson plans to try out themselves in the afternoon sessions. Since the Institute was created, the State of Florida has produced a *Resource Manual on Holocaust Education*, a massive collection of maps, primary sources, plays, interviews, poems, and essays designed to be easily copied and dispensed by the classroom teacher. The notebook is free to Florida teachers. It is divided topically into ten chapters, including material on expected subjects such as “Antecedents” and “The Final Solution,” and fleshed out with thought-provoking readings on responsibility and resistance. South Carolina has a similar publication with different handouts and interviews with survivors who happen to be South Carolina residents. A videotape of interviews with survivors accompanies the South Carolina collection and provides one of the most moving experiences of the Institute. Teachers receive both the Florida and South Carolina packets, plus a collection of short paperback novels, plays, and biographies to take home, and they are given time to browse through a large collection of other books, jackdaws, posters, maps, photographic collections, and other resources displayed in the classroom. One afternoon is spent on-line, exploring two dozen web sites that offer fully developed lesson plans, photographs, essays, and interactive exercises teachers can download or assign directly off the world wide web in their own classrooms. A final collection of lessons comes from the notebooks and units created by previous participants, which are available for inspiration throughout the week-long session.

The favorite lesson plans use a combination of resources. Most teachers like to begin with a time line and several are provided. One sketches a thousand years of prejudice and discrimination against Jews, while another focuses more narrowly on events in Germany immediately before and during World War II. Both perspectives provide the opportunity for a writing assignment on the social, political, and economic impact of discrimination. “Daniel’s Story,” a fourteen-minute video from the United States Holocaust Museum, works well with a discussion of how society deals with differences. The video comes with an extensive teacher’s guide, vocabulary review, a treatment of the multiple layers of personal identity, comparison between “prejudice” and “discrimination,” and a review of the treatment of children during the Holocaust. Who helped the children? Who helps children today in Rwanda and Bosnia? Elie Wiesel’s *Night* and Anne Frank’s *Diary* are perennial favorites stimulating students to write plays of their own, enacting famous scenes from the books or transferring the

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8 Linda Scher and Judith B. Tulchin, *South Carolina Voices: Lessons From the Holocaust*, Margaret B. Walden, Project Coordinator (Columbia: South Carolina Department of Education, in conjunction with the South Carolina Humanities Council, 1992).
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concepts to new characters in new situations. After spending an hour on a set of posters, teachers generate suggestions for poems, collages, and journal entries. Poetry collections, including Asher Torrens’s *Seven Portholes in Hell*, Barbara Helfgott Hyett’s *In Evidence: Poems of the Liberation of Nazi Concentration Camps*, and William Heyen’s *Erika: Poems of the Holocaust* bridge the divide between English or language arts classes and history and social studies classes, as do plays such as Celeste Raspanate’s *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, Robert Mauro’s *Children of the Holocaust*, and Sue Saunders’s *In Hollard Stands a House*, which the teachers read and present during the Institute. The music of the Holocaust can be explored through Arthur Miller’s *Playing for Time*.9

The most profoundly moving experience for participants and their students happens when the survivors speak. Teachers are put in touch with any survivors in their area who are willing to address classes. For those who don’t have this option, videos are available from Steven Spielberg’s collection of interviews, from the South Carolina project, and from the United States Holocaust Museum. Being face-to-face with the people who have stared into the abyss, hearing them describe the indescribable, can make students uncomfortable and might elicit inappropriate remarks, laughter, or other nervous behavior, which should be anticipated in advance and addressed. Participants at the Institute are normally noisy and talkative, bursting with enthusiasm over the activities, but the night the survivors speak the teachers are subdued; it is a night for feelings rather than analysis.

As time permits during the Institute, additional teaching resources come into play. United States policy on immigration during the Holocaust often comes up, and is well covered in a newsletter from the Constitutional Rights foundation and the movie, “Voyage of the Damned.” We compare the voyage of the ill-fated *St. Louis* to the Haitian boat people, using another article from the Foundation. National Archives documents on the proposed bombing of the railroad lines to Auschwitz come from an issue of *Social Education*. Louise Jacobsen and Mary Furlong’s *The Bystander*’s

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_Dilemma_ pairs well with the hard-to-find Yale study of _Obedience_, addressing issues of self-preservation, authority, and selflessness.  

It is a full week. The most common complaint reported on the daily evaluation forms is fatigue, but this is more than balanced by the overwhelmingly positive assessment of content, speakers, activities, and resources. At the end of the week, participants leave FSU but stay tied to the Institute and each other through e-mail and the telephone. Their assignment is to translate the material and their experiences into a suitable lesson, unit, or semester for their teaching situation. The variety of applications they create is amazing, an interwoven mix of history, drama, art, and English, causing a strengthening of traditional history curriculum through thematic development. They are specifically instructed to provide detailed outlines of lectures, copies of maps, visuals, and handouts, instructions to students for assignments, and thorough documentation. Web sites are acceptable submissions, but most send a notebook or binder.

Numerous other historical topics, in the correct setting, would be equally productive. Florida A&M University, situated adjacent to Florida State University, successfully established a similar historical institute dealing with slavery in the United States. A college or university located near an ethnic group that constitutes a significant population segment in the same area could easily house such an institute. Other programs could be devoted to state history, especially where it is required for teacher certification. Essential ingredients are a person to take the lead, interested faculty, a willingness to search for funds, and an attractive topic.

Having enough money to finance the Institute was always a problem, and still is. Nevertheless, the Institute is totally self-supporting through fees paid by participants (or their sponsoring school districts), grants, and donations. We have raised between $30,000 and $50,000 annually to diminish fees significantly. Our costs consist of scholarships for participants, honoraria for local faculty presenters and additional speakers, travel and expenses for speakers who come from throughout the United States, opening session receptions for students, participants, and donors, and use of facilities and personnel of the Center for Professional Development. The Institute scholarships cover tuition, books, teaching materials, and travel and lodging for almost all of those attending. These scholarships are the largest expense.

Tallahassee, home of Florida State University, has a very small Jewish community, but has provided enormous financial and participatory support for the Institute. The Jewish congregations, charities, and private family foundations from Tallahassee and other Florida areas have joined the Leon County Schools and the

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10 _The Constitutional Rights Foundation's Bill of Rights in Action Newsletter_, 10 (Spring 1994); _Social Education_ 66 (April-May 1993); Louise Jacobsen and Mary Furlong, _The Bystander's Dilemma_ (Culver City, CA: Social Studies School Service, 1995).
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Education Commissioner’s Task Force on Holocaust Education and the Humanities Council as steadfast supporters. Thus, the Institute fulfilled its commitment of providing a positive educational experience while remaining largely self-supporting. The FSU administration, nevertheless, has set aside a base amount approximating twenty percent of the Institute’s yearly budget. This security account has never been used, but it allows the fund raising to start with a base, and makes it possible to confirm commitments before funds are fully raised for each year’s program. The university now provides tuition waivers, a graduate assistant, and professionals to help raise funds.

The impact of this Institute is significant. Nearly 300 teachers have completed the Holocaust program. They have provided advice to curriculum oversight committees, given in-service workshops to their colleagues, and enhanced the social well-being of their communities by addressing issues of bigotry and tolerance. The history and image of the Holocaust forcefully promotes numerous lessons. “Having heard, seen, felt, and discussed the Holocaust during this institute,” one participant stated in her formal evaluation of the Institute, “I have a sense of powerful urgency to return to my students armed with activities that will promote their critical thinking on topics of intolerance, complicity, and resistance.”

Editor’s Note: For a detailed list of resources on the teaching of the Holocaust, see Christopher C. Lovett, “For Those Who Do Not Remember the Past: Bringing the Holocaust to the Classroom,” Teaching History, 24 (Spring 1999), 3-27. On-line sources to accompany Lovett’s article are available at <www.emporia.edu/socsci/journal/cybrary.htm>.

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11 Supporters include over seventy individuals and institutions.

12 CPD file.