

[CfA: Black Lives under Nazism Gelman Research Workshop \(USHMM, 6/7-16\), due 3/31/23](#)

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Jacob and Yetta Gelman International Research Workshop

Black Lives under Nazism

June 7-16, 2023

Washington, D.C.

Applications due 3/31/23

The Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum invites applications for the 2023 Jacob and Yetta Gelman International Research Workshop entitled Black Lives under Nazism. The Mandel Center will co-convene this workshop with Jacqueline Nassy Brown, Department of Anthropology, Hunter College, and Sarah Phillips Casteel, Department of English, Carleton University. The workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, June 7 through Friday, June 16, 2023, and will take place at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

This workshop advances research on the neglected history of the African diaspora in wartime Europe and the experiences of Black people caught up in the genocidal campaign of the Nazis and their collaborators. This small yet diverse population included Black Europeans, African and Caribbean colonial subjects, African-American expatriates, and soldiers from Africa, the Caribbean, and the United States. Among the expatriates were a number of American jazz musicians, such as pianist [Freddy Johnson](#) and trumpeter [Valaida Snow](#), who chose to stay in Europe when the war broke out rather than return to the segregated society they had sought to escape. Colonial soldiers, such as the Senegalese writer and statesman Léopold Senghor, and children of German colonial subjects, such as journalist and memoirist Theodor Wonja Michael, also found themselves in the clutches of the Nazi regime. [Josef Nassy](#), an artist of African and Sephardic Jewish descent from the Dutch Caribbean colony of Suriname, was imprisoned as an enemy national in internment camps where he painted the most substantial known visual record of Black prisoners in the Nazi camp system. Their experiences of persecution—which ranged from social and legal ostracization, sterilization, forced labor, and imprisonment in camps to murder—are reflected in a diverse body of archival sources, testimonies, and artistic and literary work that offers us a window onto the wartime experiences of African diaspora people.

The workshop will focus on these sources in order to address a variety of questions about Black experiences during this period. How did the treatment of Black people by the Nazis vary according to their citizenship, gender, and military or civilian status? What kinds of strategies did they develop to navigate Nazi rule and Nazi occupation? How did their creative work (music, visual art, literature) help them to survive the war years, both spiritually and materially? How did they understand Nazism in relation to other manifestations and systems of racial violence, particularly colonial racism in the

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Caribbean and Africa and the “Jim Crow” laws that codified segregation in the United States? How has postwar African diaspora writing, art, and film sought to reconstruct and draw attention to this neglected wartime history?

This workshop will stimulate new research directions in the field by contributing to both the colonial turn in Holocaust studies and to the burgeoning fields of Black German and Black European studies. By bringing together Holocaust studies and Black studies—two fields not normally connected—it will challenge the compartmentalization of academic knowledge that has rendered the experiences of Black people under the Nazis largely invisible. Moreover, it will draw attention to the role of the creative arts in recovering occluded histories. Finally, the workshop will enhance our understanding of the intersectionality of histories of racial oppression by identifying complexities of identity that were flattened by Nazi racial classification and by revealing unrecognized connections between wartime Europe and global African diaspora communities.

The workshop will consist of presentations and discussions led by participants along three thematic tracks: 1) comparative and relational methods and frameworks for addressing the contemporaneous histories of Nazism, colonial racism, and Jim Crow, 2) modes and strategies of survival in the face of racial persecution, and 3) artistic expression and performance as a response to the Nazi regime or conditions of internment and other forms of incarceration and persecution.

Daily sessions of the workshop will be comprised of presentations and discussions led by participants, as well as discussions with Museum staff and research in the Museum’s collections. The workshop will be conducted in English.

We welcome proposals that address the study of this neglected chapter of wartime history and its aftermath from a range of disciplinary perspectives.

Participants will have access to both the Museum’s downtown campus and the [David and Fela Shapell Family Collections, Conservation and Research Center](#).

Museum Resources

The Museum's David M. Rubenstein National Institute for Holocaust Documentation houses an unparalleled repository of Holocaust evidence that documents the fate of victims, survivors, rescuers, liberators, and others. The Museum’s comprehensive collection contains millions of documents, artifacts, photos, films, books, and testimonies. The Museum’s [Database of Holocaust Survivor and Victim Names](#) contains records on people persecuted during World War II under the Nazi regime. In addition, the Museum possesses the holdings of the [International Tracing Service \(ITS\)](#), which contains more than 200 million digitized pages with information on the fates of 17.5 million people who were subject to incarceration, forced labor, and displacement as a result of World War II. Many of these records have not been examined by scholars, offering unprecedented opportunities to advance the field of Holocaust and genocide studies.

The Museum’s related collections include:

- Oral histories of Afro-Germans, Black expatriates, and African and African-American soldiers and their children, such as [Dominique Mendy](#), [Theodor Wonja Michael](#), [Hans Hauck](#), [Hans](#)

- [Massaquoi](#), [Wilfred Fisher](#), and [Roslyn B. Kraus](#), among others
- The [Josef Nassy Collection](#) of [paintings](#) and drawings from the Laufen and Tittmoning internment camps
 - [Photos](#) from internment camps
 - Photos from [Africa](#), [Latin America](#), and [the Caribbean](#)
 - Oral histories of [African-American soldiers](#)
 - Records of the [Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Foreign Scholars](#), which placed European refugees at Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the US

To search the Museum's collections, please visit collections.ushmm.org/search.

To Apply

Applications are welcome from scholars affiliated with universities, research institutions, or memorial sites and in any relevant academic discipline, including anthropology, African studies, African-American/Africana studies, archeology, art history, Black studies, Caribbean studies, genocide studies, geography, history, Jewish studies, Latin American studies, law, literature, philosophy, political science, psychology, sociology, religion, Romani studies, and others. Applications will be accepted from scholars at all levels of their careers, from Ph.D. candidates to senior faculty. Scholars working at universities and research institutions in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as scholars from historically excluded backgrounds in the field, are particularly encouraged to apply.

The Mandel Center will reimburse the costs of round-trip economy-class air tickets to/from the Washington, D.C. metro area, and related incidental expenses, up to a maximum reimbursable amount calculated by home institution location, which will be distributed within 6-8 weeks of the workshop's conclusion. The Mandel Center will also provide hotel accommodation for the duration of the workshop. Participants are required to attend the full duration of the workshop.

The deadline for receipt of applications is March 31, 2023. Applications must include an abstract of no more than 300 words outlining the specific project that the applicant plans to research and present in the workshop, and a short bio in English. All application materials must be submitted in English online at ushmm.org/research-workshops.

Questions should be directed to Krista Hegburg, Ph.D., Senior Program Officer, International Academic Programs Division, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies, at khegburg@ushmm.org.