



## Past, present, and future (p)reviewed

by Raye Cohen, Board President

Time speeds up as 2021 rushes to the end of another difficult year. We struggled through the pandemic and a light shines in the distance. The doors are open on a limited basis with the return of a few volunteers; some of our programming resumes. I hope you can relate to my abbreviated version of a report to you, our supporters, our public.

► Welcome new board members, Regina Turner and Armen

Chakerian. We look forward to their ideas and efforts to help the museum grow and reach its potential.

► Even though understaffed, we continue working to raise our profile in Albuquerque and across the state:

In 2019 as part of the commemoration of the 1619 Project, we created *400 Years of African American Upstanders* with the intention of placing



the exhibit in libraries in New Mexico.

A program on what it means to be an upstander

is being developed for fourth through eighth graders who visit the library after school. *Overtured: A Life in Stone* is another exhibit of ours that soon will travel. First stop is the Rio Rancho Loma Colorado Library which now hosts *Americans and the Holocaust* from the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum through November 13th. Rio Rancho residents Emily and Kipp Watson, great supporters of ours, have generously donated funds to create a traveling exhibit on the history of the disability movement.

► NMHM's Education Leadership Team (ELT) comprised of Leslie Lawner, Susan Quintana, Michelle Thompson-Loyd, and Barb Lazar, are working together and

(see President reviews, page 8)

## Reflections at Kristallnacht

In memory of our founders

Werner Gellert (June 14, 1926 – November 9, 2019)

Frances (Frankie) Gellert (November 17, 1930 – May 18, 2007)

Julianna K. Lerner, PhD (July 22, 1929 – August 29, 2010)

Werner witnessed Kristallnacht on November 9, 1938 when Nazis torched synagogues and vandalized Jewish homes, businesses, and schools. Some 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and sent to Nazi concentration camps.

German Jews had been subjected to repressive policies since 1933 when Adolph Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Until the "Night of the Broken Glass," most persecution against the Jews was nonviolent.

*Kristallnacht marked a dramatic change.*

# Volunteer coordinator joins museum staff

by and about Molly Twite

Although I was born in Phoenix, AZ, I've spent most of my life on the East Coast, in Massachusetts and New York. I moved back to the Southwest almost three years ago to pursue my M.A in history at the University of New Mexico, where I focused on oral history, gender, and the aftermath of violence and armed conflicts in Latin America. I received my undergraduate degree in history from Simmons University in Boston, MA.

In my free time, I enjoy reading, swimming, traveling, hanging out with my cat, and writing fiction, mainly short stories.

Previously, I've worked at the Laura Ingalls Wilder Historic Homes in De Smet, South Dakota, and the Metropolitan Waterworks Museum in Boston. My favorite part about working in museums is that every day is different; there are always new people to meet and new stories to hear.

I'm looking forward to seeing what I will learn working here at this museum!



Brent and his human, Molly.

## Local senior citizen braids to beat a world record



Hiddekel Sara Burks

A mile – or 5,280 feet – would exceed the record for the world's longest textile handmade braid, but that's not going to be enough for Hiddekel Sara Burks. Braiding for at least three hours a day, five days a week in the front window of the museum, our artist-in-residence, the master braider and retired nurse, would like to reach her goal by the end of the year. That target is to exceed the mile by 720 feet by hitting 6,000 and earning a place in the Guinness World Records.

At this writing (on or about November 4) the 70-some-year-old ethnic folk artist has reached – at her best estimate – 4,330 feet.

The almost mile-long record she is attempting to break was met in May of 2018 by more than one person. It was achieved by the Somerset County (NJ) 4-H Club where myriad members completed different parts which then were joined together to create the finished product.

While the club's youngsters learned about teamwork, Ms. Burks is shedding light on the CROWN Act which is an expression of her culture. The acronym stands for Create a Respectful and Open Workplace for Natural Hair and prohibits discrimination based on natural hairstyles.

The founder of the National Braiders Guild, Hiddekel is a welcome addition to our daily staff and volunteers. She draws in visitors and engages them in interesting dialogue. Please visit <https://nmholocaustmuseum.org> if you wish to contribute to her enterprise. You can donate yarn, time, or funding.

**CROWN Act**  
**Targeting hairstyles**  
**associated with race**  
**is racial discrimination.**

# Scroll rolled with a lot of help from our friends

by Camelia Caton-Garcia, Collections Manager



Pictured, from left, Rabbi Paul Citrin, John Cornish, and Camelia Caton-Garcia

Thank you to volunteer John Cornish and special thank you to Rabbi Paul Citrin for their help and guidance in rolling our Sefer Torah, Memorial Scrolls Trust #666. Our Torah is one of 1,564 scrolls recovered from Eastern Europe after the Holocaust. Rolling the Torah from end to end annually helps to prevent fungal spores and moisture that may damage the scroll and *etz chaim* (wooden staves).

The Torah is open to Leviticus 19:18. Rabbi Citrin summarizes the passage this way: “The definition of holiness in this passage points to our obligation to imitate divine values by living lives of righteousness, justice and compassion...Its accurate translation is ‘You shall love your neighbor; he is like you.’”

You can find out more about Torah #666 at <https://nmholocaustmuseum.org/czech-torah/>.

## Brenda Rabinowitz shares family saga with visitors

by Molly Twite, Volunteer Coordinator

“People need to learn from the past, especially when confronting the issues in the present.” So declares Brenda Rabinowitz, New York City native and volunteer with the museum for the past six years.

Her career in education has prepared her well for engaging with our varied visitors, her favorite part of the job. Sharing the Holocaust story, particularly with children and school groups, is her way of honoring her family’s experience in the camps and the memory of those who did not survive.

“It’s a way to pay respect to the dead who were not given any while alive,” she says.

When Brenda is called upon to speak to school groups, she uses a PowerPoint presentation she created about her family, the ones who escaped and those who didn’t.

Thank you Brenda and all our volunteers for your valuable work.



Brenda Rabinowitz

# Archives *Alive!*

## Remarkable collection entrusted to NMHM

by Camelia Caton-Garcia, Collections Manager

NMHM is thrilled to announce the acquisition of a new collection from Santa Fe donor, Yara Pichford. Yara has chosen to entrust a wide range of materials that belonged to several generations of her family to the museum for our collections and exhibit development. Yara's parents,

Carl/Karl and

Lita/Melitta

(Heiber) Bloch,

later Blake, were

Holocaust

survivors of

Latvian and Polish

decent from

Vienna. The

collection includes

family photo-

graphs, albums,

documents,

passports, objects,

and ephemera.

The materials tell

an incredible story

of survival, resilience, and loss and will be an

invaluable addition to the museum.

Yara's mother and father, Carl and Lita Blake, escaped Vienna using false papers created with the help of a Catholic organization. They had full, complex lives in Viennese society when they were forced to flee; Lita was a piano prodigy and Karl a chemist and multiple patent holding inventor. Lita left Austria on a cultural visa in March of 1938, just days before the Anschluss. She and her brother took refuge in Antwerp where Lita saw her brother and others rounded up on the street and deported. Her brother and her parents would perish in Auschwitz. Carl managed to escape a few days before Lita and they eventually fled to Belgium. From Belgium they

boarded a ship to Brazil where Yara was born. In 1946, the family left Rio de Janeiro and settled in the United States. When in her nineties, Lita moved to Santa Fe to be with her only child Yara Pitchford.

NMHM has been working in concert with researcher and artist Lena Keslin to document and

organize the materials. Lena

befriended Yara and her

mother Lita before Lita's death

in 2009 (at age 104) and has

been documenting and

researching Lita's history for

well over a decade. Lena has

also produced art illustrating

Lita's story.

The opportunities for exhibit

development and research that

accompany this collection are

(see Archives Alive!, next page)



Yara Pichford and her mother, Lita B. Blake



Detail from Melitta/Lita Bloch's Brazilian passport, 1945

**Archives Alive!**

(continued from previous page)

endless. Yara and Lena have given the museum a chance to deeply explore Jewish life in Vienna before the Holocaust as well as the complexities of survival, including the sorrows and joys of rebuilding a life after atrocity. Thank you to Yara and Lena for such generosity with their time, knowledge, and this extraordinary gift.

*It is with great sadness that we announce Yara's death on November 5.*

Zahl: *1853/32* Diözese: *Wien*  
 Gau: *Wien* Pfarre: *Alt-Lerchenfeld*  
 Polit. Bezirk: *Wien* Letzte Post: */*  
 (Stadt mit eig. Statut)

**Geburts- und Tauf-Schein.** (Zeugnis.)

dem hiesigen Geburts- und Tauf-Buche Tom. *92* Fol. *189*

wird hiemit amtlich bezeugt, daß  
 in (Ort, Straße, Nr.): *Wien 6. Rspsterharygasse 12*  
 am (in Buchst.): *(5) fünften Juni* Eintausend  
*neun* hundert *drei* (in Ziffern): *5. 6. 1903*  
 geboren und am (Datum und Jahr): *5. Januar 1932*  
 von hochw. Herrn: *Koop. Gregor Schmidt*  
 nach römisch-katholischem Ritus getauft wurde das  
 Kind (Zu- und Vornam): *Bloch Melitta Luise*  
*geb. Heiber ehel. Tochter*

Vaters (Zu- u. Vorname, Rel., Char., Tag u. Jahr d. Geb., Geb.- u. Zuständigkeitsort, Abstammung):  
*Heiber Markus Ernst, Büchhalter in Wien,*  
*und dorthin rüständig ehel. Sohn des Johann*  
*Heiber und der Gertrud geb. Kaiser.*

Mutter (Zu- u. Vorname, Rel., Geb.-Datum u. -Ort, Abstamm.; event. auch Stand, Char. u. Zust.-Ort):  
*Heiber Teresine Julie, Wien und*  
*rüständig nach Wien ehel. Tochter des Leopold*  
*Lütz und der Angela geb. Strauß.*

(2) → (1)

Paten: *Josef Glogar kath. Beamter, Wien.*  
*Koop. am 5. Januar 1932.*

Anmerkung:

Urkund dessen die eigenhändige Unterschrift des Gefertigten und das beige druckte Amtsfiegel.  
*Wien, Pfarraut Alt-Lerchenfeld, am 5. Januar 1932*  
*Gregor Schmidt*  
 Pfarrer.

AL-LERCHENFELD Pfarraut

Druck und Verlag von Eduard Steger (Inh. Hermann Feinghorn), Wien. F 18. 116038



Carl/Karl Bloch's Reisepass, 1929

False Roman Catholic birth and baptism certificate for Melitta Bloch

*Addressing hate and intolerance by empowering upstanders*

Raising funds and ...

## Smiling while observing the mask mandate

Friday volunteer John Cornish happily models our museum protective mask, available in the museum gift shop for \$15 as well as online at

<https://nmholocaustmuseum.org/store>

And PLEASE, all you **Amazon shoppers**, don't forget to use Amazon Smile and designate us as your favorite charity.



## NMHM continues to join monthly ABQ Artwalk

by Camelia Caton-Garcia, Collections Manager

The museum's doors have been open a little later than usual on particular Fridays in order to participate in ABQ Artwalk. This event gives us a variety of opportunities which include showing art from our collections as well as the creativity of our museum community.



Art of Alice Charlasch

In October we sponsored the first NMHM "Family" show, displaying work by museum volunteers, staff, and board. From now through the end of November, you can catch the show and sale of pieces by the late Alice Charlasch. She was accomplished in diverse media and known for her exquisite abstract prints, paintings, and groundbreaking crystal photomicrography. Both shows were curated by NMHM's own curatorial assistant, Johnny Macas.

Moving forward, we will continue to offer special programming and extended hours on the first Friday of the month (or whenever the monthly event is scheduled). The museum is committed to the community inclusion and local arts promotion that has made Artwalk flourish. We

*"Artwalk is an independent arts organization and community of artists working to elevate New Mexico's emerging creative economy."*

hope you have a chance to stop by during Artwalk to see the museum and our unique art presentations.

Visit our website to learn more about Artwalk and what's in store this winter.

### Major retailers pull books that deny the Holocaust

Books that promote Holocaust denial are no longer being sold by Target and Barnes & Noble following a protest October 15 from the Simon Wiesenthal Center, a Jewish human rights organization.

Additional individuals and institutions are urging Walmart and Amazon to follow suit.

Found in our Silvan Library

# How do we deal with the weight of heavy histories?

by Molly Twite, Volunteer Coordinator

In 1997, Iris Chang published *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, the first definitive account of Japanese atrocities during their occupation of Nanking. It met both critical acclaim and criticism.

On December 13th, 1937, Japanese military forces swept through the ancient Chinese capital, systematically killing, maiming, and raping between 50,000 and 300,000 innocent Chinese men, women and children. The worst of the violence spanned a brutal six-week period and was notable for the exceptional cruelty of the murders, which Chang recounts in merciless detail. Japanese soldiers conducted “killing games,” buried prisoners alive, bayoneted infants, and raped somewhere between 20,000 and 80,000 women and girls, often sexually mutilating them as well. The book, as might be expected, generated a firestorm of controversy almost immediately. Detractors pointed to Chang’s journalistic background, her occasionally questionable use of sources, and her “polemical” tone, which stands at odds with traditional academic writing. Despite these criticisms, there is perhaps no greater example of both the power and the cost of bearing witness to historical atrocities.

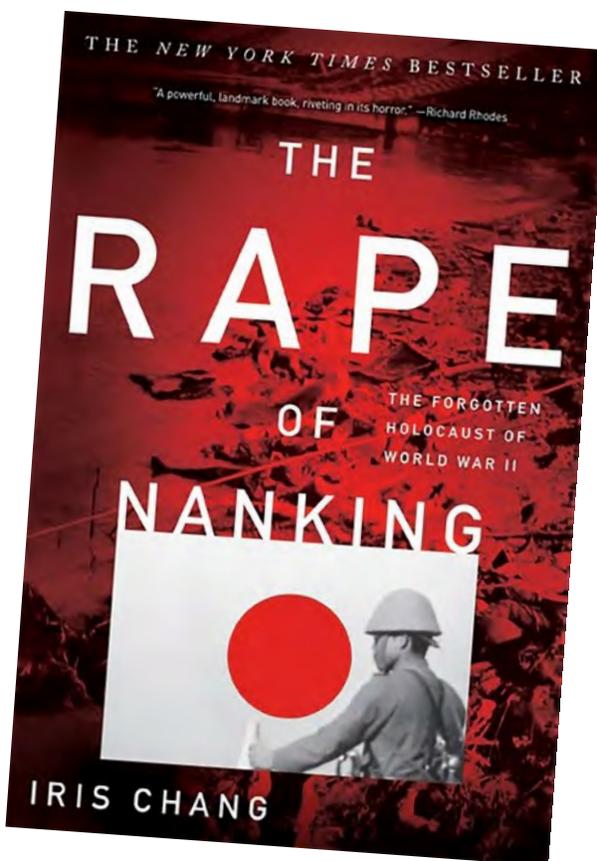
With this book, Chang attempts to answer two questions: why did the Japanese soldiers do what they did in Nanking, and why has the entire incident

sion and strict codes of honor.

To uncover the Chinese side of the story, Chang conducted several oral interviews with survivors, many of whom still lived in

poverty in the absence of any recognition or reparations from the Japanese government.

Lastly, Chang turns to the Westerners who stayed in the city. One particularly interesting individual is John Rabe, who Chang calls the “Oskar Schindler of China.” As the head of the Nazi party in Nanking, Rabe used his German status to carve out a safe zone in the city, risking his life to shelter Chi-



nese refugees from the violent whims of the Japanese army. To tell this contradictory story, Chang discovered Rabe’s wartime journals, a major contribution to the historical record of Nanking.

The second half of the book is devoted to understanding why the world seems to have largely forgotten the massacre. She lays

remained at the fringes of traditional narratives about WWII? She divides the book into three perspectives: Japanese perpetrators, Chinese victims, and Westerners, who stayed and did what they could to save lives by operating an international safety zone. To answer the first question, Chang turns to history, offering examples like the Bushidō code and kamikaze pilots to explain a long tradition of military aggres-

nese refugees from the violent whims of the Japanese army. To tell this contradictory story, Chang discovered Rabe’s wartime journals, a major contribution to the historical record of Nanking.

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## President reviews and previews museum's past, present, and future

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independently on a statewide mandate to teach about the Holocaust for social justice and human rights and on codifying

Holocaust lessons for grades six through 12 and an elementary program focused on building empathy.

**NOVEMBER 23rd**

**Don't miss  
Independent Lens on  
New Mexico PBS**

*Home from School -  
The Children of Carlisle*

## How do we deal with the weight of heavy histories?

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part of the blame on Cold War politics, which encouraged both the U.S. and China to remain silent in order to win Japan's support. Her main concern, however, is to show how "the Japanese, as a people, manage, nurture, and sustain their collective amnesia." Her claims that Japan was committing a "second rape" by covering up the massacre and scrubbing all record of it from their archives and history books proved to be some of the most controversial in the book, as Japanese conservatives and ultranationalists see any attempt to recognize Japan's war crimes as an attack on the country itself.

Chang spent much of the rest of her life campaigning for Japanese recognition of the massacre and reparations for the survivors.

*The Rape of Nanking* was written in 1997; since then, there have been modest steps by the Japanese

government to acknowledge their own atrocities during the war, but there is still a long way to go.

This battle against forgetting and misinformation is one we're fighting more and more in our own time. From school administrators in Texas teaching "opposing views" of the Holocaust to right-wing furor over teaching histories of racism and oppression, it is more important than ever to not only recognize and name injustice and atrocities as they happen, but to act in whatever way we can.

As Chang points out, the Japanese atrocities at Nanking were front-page news around the world almost as they were happening, and while audiences were horrified they remained "passive spectators to the unthinkable." She compares this passivity to responses to the genocides in Rwanda and the former

Yugoslavia. From our standpoint nearly 25 years later we can add any number of genocides and mass murder to this list, from the persecution of Darfuris in Sudan to the Rohingya in Myanmar.

In 2004, while completing research on the Bataan Death March for her fourth book, Iris Chang suffered a breakdown and subsequently took her own life. Her death continues to spark discussions among historians over how to handle research into traumatizing subjects. *The Rape of Nanking*, like many of the books in our library, is not easy to read. But Chang's book, for all its anger and despair, stands as a record of both the limits and the possibilities of bearing witness to historical atrocities. In the end what matters is that the story is told, and every time it is the weight of these heavy histories gets a little bit lighter.

*Upstanders make a commitment to support the rights of all.*