

## **Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission: Texas Veteran Liberators APP, Book and Fort Hood Kickoff Project**

Texas public school educators need additional information and tools to effectively teach the period of the concentration camps and their liberation during the Holocaust. The Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission (THGC) were charged to create classroom instruction with an interactive digital app to teach this period in history. With the changes to the Texas Education and Knowledge Standards (TEKS) adopted in 2011 for US History, World History and World Geography it is imperative that educators have the basic understanding, materials and tools to teach the Liberation Period. In addition, after considerable discussion with the College Boards, they agreed to include the Liberation Period of WWII as it was specifically an American activity worthy of inclusion in their AP US History, AP European History and AP World History curriculums. This took effect in the 2016 school year. ***We study the past to gain knowledge for the future.***

After having the liberation period included in the TEKS (2011); THGC has been working for the past two years, with the USHMM and the College Board AP Divisions, seeking the best approach to meet these needs. THGC had already issued a contract to Baylor History Department to acquire the testimonies of 19 Texas veterans who were liberators of concentration and slave labor camps at the end of WWII. These veterans throughout Texas were not previously interviewed by and Texas Holocaust Museums. After the interviews were complete they were put up on our website (2015) and shared them with the Library of Congress Veteran's project.

THGC followed this project by digitizing existing veteran videos held by El Paso Holocaust Museum (6) and Holocaust Museum Houston (33). Dallas had already digitized their veteran videos (25). THGC agreed to incorporate them into a book as a Texas Honor Role of veterans for their part in the Liberation Period. These 83 veteran testimonies along with an expected additional 300 veterans would be cataloged into a Texas Veteran's Honor Role. The Honor Role information would include; their branch of service, years of service, home town or place of residence, camp liberated and date of liberation as a part of a published book.

### **Project information:**

As a part of the resources to illustrate the understanding of the Liberation Period of WWII, THGC will have an interactive digital app and a book of the Texas Veteran's testimonies of their experience when they entered concentration, slave labor and extermination camps used by the Nazi's perpetrators. This book will be compiled from veteran testimonies gathered in the 2014 THGC project plus the recently digitized testimonies recorded earlier by Holocaust museums throughout Texas. The Texas veteran testimonies will provide students and researchers with verifiable information from eye witnesses at the end of WWII.



Texas US Army liberators at concentration camp Dachau

The purpose of the app is to place on the web a means by which the teacher or student can be present with the veteran as he walked through this horrific time in history. The app will be interactive to the extent that the viewer will be able to examine the different locations of liberation and respond to archival video footage. Veteran's testimonies will be directly accessible and historical reference links to their unit's activities and the liberation locations of those facilities. The observer may choose which veteran's testimony or camp and then proceed on a journey through historical evidence. The app begins with an overview of the Holocaust and the American experience of the Liberation Period with links to accredited sources for more detailed descriptions. With today's technology the observer may travel along with the veteran and interact with him to be a witness to the liberation. This experience will allow the observer to be present as they view open railcars, enter prison gates, camp yards, barracks and crematoriums. They will be present when the veteran meets the survivors.

We believe that today's students use technology to gain insight and perspective about the past. We chose not to entertain but involve the student so that they can see the consequences of genocide. These are the lessons we must learn if we are not to repeat events of the past. This project is a major undertaking with a cost of approximately \$366,000. Your support will make this experiential project meaningful to those who will be our future.

THGC has issued a contract to Texas Tech University for the development of an interactive digital app and book to be used by Texas high school students and nationwide for the AP history courses. The interactive app that students will use on their computers, notebooks or mobile devices is intended as an assignment exercise to be discussed in class following their experience with the app. The contract includes teacher lesson plans and other support information. In addition TTU press will prepare a book to be distributed to: high schools (3,709); museum quality books (250) for presentation to

their liberators; and, THGC presentation copies (100) with the story of the history of the camps, the Liberation Period, and veteran testimonies featured in the app plus the Texas Veteran's Honor Role.

THGC is paying the cost for the interactive app but the Friends and the Museums must burden the cost to produce the books, the anticipated kickoff and the traveling of a Liberator's exhibit. THGC is coordinating with the Texas Veterans Commission (TVC) to have a launch of the app in the summer of 2017. The kickoff will be at Ft. Hood, where many of the Texas veterans trained before participating in WWII. TVC has taken the responsibility to coordinate with Ft. Hood and will attempt to have the Secretary of the Army and General of the Army participate in the launch program. The idea is to have the US Army promote this through their organizations. In addition, the Governor of Texas, the Chair of TEA and the president of the College Boards will participate in the program.

#### **The budget estimate:**

Description	Amount	Remarks
TTU contract:	\$172,000	Funded by THGC
TTU book preparation:	\$17,000	to be funded
4,000 books @\$14.75 each	\$59,000	to be funded
Liberator travel to Ft. Hood, 30	\$15,000	to be funded
Educational materials	\$13,000	to be funded
Miscellaneous	\$15,000	to be funded
Traveling exhibit	\$75-95,000	TBD

#### **The schedule**

Draft outline of app:	December 2016
Complete app	June 2017
Post app online	July 2017
Print books	July 23017
Launch at Fort Hood	July 2017
Distribute books	August 2017
Travel exhibit	2017-2019

At this time we need to raise the following money for the Liberator kickoff, exhibits and books, scheduled for the summer of 2017. TTU press will publish books at an estimated average cost of \$14.75 each (\$59,000). The setup for the printing is \$17,000. The estimated costs for bringing Liberators (30 plus care giver) to Fort Hood is \$15,000. In addition we may spend \$13,000 for educational materials and another \$15,000 for miscellaneous expenses. TTU is proposing a traveling exhibit with three galleries: gallery one, the story of the liberation period and the camps; gallery two, portraits of some of the liberators in the digital app and a Texas Honor Role of the liberators and the camps they liberated; gallery three computers to use the app. The cost for this exhibit is estimated at \$15,000, exclusive of computers, for three exhibits and \$60,000-\$80,000 to travel it throughout Texas to all Universities that have a ROTC program, all US Army military bases and Texas counties with populations greater than 100,000.

Frank Kasman is heading up this project. Martin Fein will be the contact with the College Boards and Cheyanne Perkins is the contact with TTU, TEA and TVC.

## **Core Educational Goals:**

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES (in line with TEKS and AP exam):**

- Students will understand the context of the Second World War and be able to place the Holocaust within that historical framework.
- Students will engage with composite historical actors (two U.S. liberators and one Holocaust survivor) and will grasp the significance of
  - o the profundity of calculated, systematic genocide during the Second World War
  - o the role of the death camps in the Final Solution
  - o the significance of American soldiers' experiences as they came upon work and death camps in Europe
  - o the role of the American military in the final stages of the Second World War
  - o the role of the American military in the liberation of the camps
  - o the psychological and emotional effects of witnessing these atrocities on U.S. soldiers
  - o the importance of remembering the Holocaust, survivors and victims, and of honoring the U.S. Liberators
- Students will be exposed to historical work, the use of primary documents, texts, oral interviews, videos, artifacts, etc., and the ways in which they tell a narrative about the human past and condition.
- Students will be able to think critically, to analyze evidence, and to communicate the historical narrative of the Liberation, the Holocaust, its context, and its legacy.
- Students will be able to evaluate the different "texts" of the digital book/app – testimonial, letters, objects, artwork, and literature.
- Students will be able to explain the complexities of war, the duties and responsibilities of soldiers, and the consequences of war on all populations.

### **Number of Texas Schools – Public and Private:**

Information about public and private schools in Texas, covering student enrollments and faculty: 1: Number of Schools: 11,160; 2: Number of Students: 5,309,430; 3: Number of teachers: 344,879. The number of public and private high schools in Texas is 3,709.

Since every high school will have access to the lesson plans, via the THGC's and Texas Tech University websites, up to 700,000 Texas students and more than 515,000 AP

students, nationwide, are expected to be exposed to this material during the next biennium.

## Supporting Documentation

### Organization Information

#### Mission:

The mission of the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission is; ***to ensure that resources are available to Texas students, educators, and the general public regarding the Holocaust and other genocides, and in doing so imbue in individuals a sense of responsibility to uphold human value.*** Since its inception the

Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission has striven to educate our citizens to:

- 1) Learn from the past
- 2) Chose right over wrong
- 3) Take responsibility for the consequences of one's actions
- 4) Make known society's concern for the rights of others
- 5) Take action when genocide occurs

Among the Commission's goals is to educate teachers and students to better understand the consequences of hatred, bigotry and apathy. ***Our focus on students' education is an investment in our future.***

#### History:

Texas Senate Bill 482, 2009, established the Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission to make our citizens aware of the consequences of genocide. Commissioners were appointed by Governor Rick Perry; Lieutenant Governor David Dewhurst; and Speaker of the House Joe Straus. Fifteen commissioners are joined by ad hoc representatives of the Texas Education Agency; the Texas Higher Education Committee; and the Texas Veterans Commission. Texas is one of only twelve states convening a commission addressing these vital issues, and we are leading the national initiative to effect educational changes in all fifty states.

#### Major THGC Achievement's

THGC's significant accomplishments are extensive. The Commission has:

- Developed a number of resources and lesson plans for classroom use and has held workshops in every Educational Service Center (ESC) region in Texas
- Launched Holocaust teacher's module on TEA's 'Project Share' by digital means with remote access throughout the state.
- Preserved the oral testimonies of Texan veterans who helped liberate concentration camps, and have shared their histories with schools and the Library of Congress.
- Completed project to digitize and transcribe liberator testimony held at Texas Holocaust museums
- Awarded grants to institutions creating programs that support the THGC mission.
- Encouraged the Texas Legislature to pass a resolution annually recognizing Genocide Awareness and Prevention Month, and commemorated it through successful student video contests.

- Utilized volunteers to review textbooks and compile educational resources.
- Made recommendations for modification of Social Studies Textbooks for US History, World History and World Geography: textbook review committees worked with TEA
- Traveled a Bosnian genocide exhibit throughout the state.
- Annually held a statewide student video contest to demonstrate their understanding of what it means to be a bystander.
- Began annual educator grants program for Texas schools (17 grants awarded)
- Placed on THGC website Ten Stages of Genocide lesson plan
- Developed content for mandated core curriculum ethics in higher education and completed contract with University of Texas El Paso to create online professor's modules.
- Placed ethics module online at Higher Education Coordinating Commissions website
- Successfully worked with the College Boards to include the Holocaust and genocide in the advancement placement curriculums of AP US History, AP World History and AP European History.
- Issued a contract to Texas Tech University for the development and production of a Texas Liberator's mobile app and digital book.
- Issued contract to UT Medical School Holocaust for development of a health professionals education module.
- Developed and issued a contract to Baylor University for oral histories of survivors of other genocides – videos and transcripts.
- Petitioned President Obama to take action to stop the genocidal atrocities of ISIS.
- Completed work for Genocide Workshops and online library of vetted resources.
- Developed a strategic plan for 2015-2019.

The public's perception of THGC's accomplishments has been favorable in all areas of our endeavors. Educator workshops have been received favorably, exhibits are well-attended and effective, and resources are being used by the public.