

Illinois Holocaust & Genocide Commission

Public Meeting
Wednesday May 19 2021
7:00pm - 8:30pm

FOCUS AREA: **EDUCATION**

ATTENDANCE

Expected:

Danny M. Cohen - Yes
Sarah Cushman - Yes
Sara Feigenholtz - No
Nora Flanagan - Yes
Peter Fritzsche - Yes
Jack Goodman - Yes
Greg Kocourek - Yes
Charlotte Masters - Yes
Sammi Oberman - Yes
Erika Quinn - Yes
Bob Roth - Yes
Lina Sergie Attar - No
Kelley Szany - Yes
Kheang Un - Yes

Apologies:

Darren Reisberg

Other Commissioners (expected on Monday):

Susan Abrams
Dale Fowler
Jessica Gall
Doug Kiel
Bob Morgan
Ginger Ostro
Keisha Rembert
Jennifer Scott
Kheang Un
Jill Weinberg

MEETING NOTES

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm

Attendance was taken by **Kelley Szany**.

Cohen asked **Kheang Un** and **Bob Roth** to introduce themselves to the group.

Cohen asked each member to share why they were interested in focusing on the Education working group. Each Commissioner answered as follows:

Danny C - importance of marginalized narratives

Peter F - Holocaust education and working toward promise of “never again”

Erika Q - raise knowledge of other historical and contemporary genocides

Kheang U - education of the topic of Genocide and the Holocaust

Jack G - grandchild of survivors. Importance of sharing history and personal stories.

Bob R - as a parent and retired military have observed Holocaust and genocide education is lacking

Sarah C - importance to educate about other genocides and mass atrocities - help students think about what sort of mass atrocities are in our own past in order to connect us to today.

Charlotte M - educational development - bias education; construction of memory

Nora F - importance of education about other genocides, but also larger anti-bias education and is needed.

Greg K - what are the underpinning ideas of how we ask students to engage with materials?

Kelley S - teaching Holocaust and genocide can be done well and not so well; weaknesses in mandate; educating beyond students; public and adult education

Cohen then moved to review the working group’s Goals and Priorities and opened up to members regarding thoughts and reflections.

Quinn stated she shared the ISBE Social Science Standards as there are now and wanted to know how the new standards address the work of the Commission. **Cohen** noted that as an advisor on the new standards development there are very broad categories (identity), issues around race and racism, but again largely focused on skills and does not dictate content. **Cohen** suggested a small working group to review the new standards and how those can be applied to teaching Holocaust and genocide education. **Quinn** concurred with the strength of the idea.

Flanagan suggested we provide educators a menu of standards with lesson plans, suggested readings, activities and discussion questions. **Fritzche** posed questions regarding the mandate itself particularly in regard to length of time, content and pedagogical approaches, and appropriate grade level. **Goodman** spoke to his experiences and challenges with mandates across the country. **Goodman** also noted research needed on what students are taking from learning about the Holocaust **Un** asked if Holocaust and genocide education is too restrictive, doesn’t go broad enough? **Szany** gave an overview of the current state of the mandate. Mandate is vague; Problem with including younger grades; Time is not specified; Not funded; Field trip fulfills the mandate; A sentence fulfills the mandate. **Cohen** wondered if there is a minimum time requirement that the mandate could address.

Cushman addressed gaps - focus on work regarding quality especially when it comes to other genocides. **Cohen** posed - do we want to focus on quality focused on classroom right now and

supporting teachers? Or, should we focus our efforts on training, pre-service, both? What might both look like?

Oberman asked how do teachers know about how to access - interface and use these resources, how are they told, directed to them - should be a priority. **Quinn** concurred that training is a great idea ensuring pedagogically teachers are learning. **Flanagan**, let's find dos and don'ts, guidelines, and ways to make these materials accessible.

Roth suggested a possible survey to schools/districts to assess current state of Holocaust and genocide education. **Cohen** asked how best to get data, collected across the state to identify gaps. **Masters** noted that if we do a survey we should include headlines with subquestions. **Goodman** referenced **Cohen** encouraged Commissioners to remember we could use researchers or others at the university or organizational level.

Oberman suggested we focus on 8 / 10 Stages of Genocide

Szany noted it might be best to focus on early warning signs, and avoid the linear approach of Stanton's Stages, which are problematic and educators/scholars are moving away from today. Better to focus on early warning signs or "triggers" of genocide.

Cohen questioned what online resources are available from other organizations, museums, etc. to put in teachers' hands now. And do some long-term work, at the same time.

Kocourek inquired about delivery of professional development for educators. He wondered if there should be a required training on a cyclical basis - 1-3 hours as part of an Institute Day - a dedicated professional respect around Holocaust and genocide training. State-level required teacher training / PD.

Flanagan noted that CPS does this regarding trans/LGBTQ education; CPS teachers have to do an annual training in regard and it includes resources and tools.

Cushman inquired about the role of colleges/universities regarding teacher professional development. **Un** supported idea of adding colleges/universities to training cycle.

Cohen inquired if there was an opportunity to use university/college faculty to support one another. Are there local partnerships to leverage to help what is happening in high schools and middle schools? **Cushman** supports the idea of networks between colleges/universities & middle/high schools.

Discussion moved to the idea of public education - public programming. **Szany** and **Cohen** noted there is very little done with regards to public genocide education, but noted that IL has such robust communities of genocide survivors

Close to meeting Commissioners discussed possible sub-working groups that could be pulled together under the focus of Education.

- Research on gaps in middle school and high school education

- Resources available in the short term - **Nora F**
- Teacher training
- Adults / parent education
- College / university partnerships / support

Cohen and **Szany** noted they would send a survey to Commissioners to find out what subgroups Commissioners want to participate in.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted
Kelley Szany

Illinois Holocaust & Genocide Commission

Public Meeting
Monday May 24 2021
7:00pm - 8:30pm

FOCUS AREA: **MEMORIALIZATION**

ATTENDANCE

Expected:

Susan Abrams - YES
Danny M. Cohen - YES
Sarah Cushman - YES
Jack Goodman - YES
Jessica Gall - YES
Doug Kiel - YES
Charlotte Masters - YES
Keisha Rembert - YES
Jennifer Scott - YES
Lina Sergie Attar - YES
Kelley Szany - YES
Kheang Un - YES
Jill Weinberg - YES
Sen. Sara Feigenholz - NO

Apologies:

Sen. Sara Feigenholz -
Dale Fowler -
Bob Morgan -

Other Commissioners:

Nora Flanagan
Peter Fritzsche
Greg Kocourek
Sammi Oberman
Ginger Ostro
Erika Quinn
Bob Roth

MEETING NOTES

Attendance was taken

Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm.

Danny reviewed goals of sub-working groups with Commission members - focus on specific areas of interest outside larger Commission meetings

Introductions. Why are Commissioners interested in memorialization and what can they bring to the table?

Danny - hidden, silenced, and marginalized narratives

Jessica - how to bring hidden or silenced voices to the table

Keisha - preservation of history; memories fade but how we do memories close as historical record

Jennifer - hidden, lost, and devalued stories; co-Chair of City of Chicago Monuments Project

Doug - conversations of Native American memorialization

Susan - topic central to work of IHMEC - Holocaust and genocide memorialization

Jill - looking at un-doing of memorials; questioning of legitimacy of monuments/memorials building on worldwide conversation

Charlotte - grandparents generation - as we don't have first person perspective how can memorialize

Jack - have been fortunate to listen to survivors; working toward a powerful, useful and relevant memorialization; fascinated by questions of memory

Lina - memory and collective memory; multiple perspectives; as a Syrian American this is ongoing - trauma - memory being erased as atrocities are occurring to transfer to the future

Sarah - scholarship as a form of memorialization; intrigued by questions of what we memorialize and uses and mis-uses of memorialization

Kelley - shared memory - memorialization in not only edifices but also testimony, programs, resolutions, commemorations

The group discussed the general focus for the Commission's memorialization work, to include researching what already exists, identifying gaps, using gathered data to work toward proposed solutions with organizations and community partners. The following points were made:

Keisha asked where do we start and where do we stop?

Danny suggested that we use our passion, expertise, and interests to guide what we prioritize

Charlotte suggested that we create a centralized list of Illinois memorials

Susan agreed

Jessica asked: as a State, what are we recognizing? What can we build on without "co-opting"?

Sarah asked about monuments and questioning monuments

Jill suggested we organize a presentation from experts, including experts at USHMM

Jennifer talked about the overlap with the Chicago Monuments Project who are asking what exists and what's possible? What should and could public participation look like in the Commission's work? Public input will be driven by capacity issues.

Jessica asked who are we memorializing? Who is telling those stories? What is the landscape of memorialization? Should we seek to replicate existing frameworks? What already exists? We don't have to reinvent the wheel.

Sarah suggested that an overview of the Chicago Monuments Project could be really helpful.

Jennifer clarified that the list of monuments are on the website.

Jill suggested that some scholars (e.g., Tim Snyder) are already looking at this broadly.

Jennifer clarified that webinars and a speaker series are available on the Chicago Monuments Project website.

Sarah asked can this Commission help the Monuments Project? Can we be of use?

Jack asked how this connects to the ongoing work of museums and existing public events and published articles. Are communities already leading and guiding us on this?

Danny suggested we think about the Commission's Advisory Council. Who could be brought in here to offer guidance?

Jessica volunteered to guide the Advisory Council piece

Danny talked about memorialization as it relates to legislation and State recognition. Is this something the Commission wants to take on?

Lina asked how do we address intersectionality? How do we share stories across communities? Do we want to consider formal days of memory and memorial?

Keisha asked where does the momentum lie, legislatively?

Jennifer asked is official recognition the goal?

Charlotte asked, Is this through a website? Through events?

Susan asked, What's already happening? Can we bring communities together?

Sarah pointed out that the United States isn't good at recognizing its own atrocities. We have an opportunity here.

Doug talked about the challenges of domestic and local engagement and how this will amount to getting the State of Illinois to admit it's done wrong.

Danny asked, Is the Commission a group of individuals? What can and can't we do and say?

Doug suggested we bring together the Commission and the Chicago Monuments Project

Sarah agreed

Jennifer suggested that people want more public interaction

Jennifer suggested that, if a monument is going to be removed, there should be a ritual ceremony, to focus on the legacy of history.

Kheang asked, How do we identify real gaps that need to be addressed?

The group identified potential sub-groups for the memorialization work of the Commission:

- Research what exists in Illinois in the memorialization space (perhaps crowd source to keep it up-to-date)
- Research what exists outside of Illinois in the memorialization space (perhaps crowd source to keep it up-to-date)
- Public conversations about memorials, memory, and memorialization
- Public events / ceremonies / commemorations
- Legislation, State recognition
- Illinois's role in commemoration and -- national and state genocide
- Communication, eventually
- Guiding Principles
- How can we educate ourselves about the history of genocide in Illinois?

Susan made the point that broad brainstorming is important, but we'll need to prioritize and focus

Jennifer asked: Can we develop guiding principles to guide our work? And offered examples:

CMP Principles: <https://chicagomonuments.org/principles>

CMP Talks: <https://vimeo.com/539349010> and <https://vimeo.com/525803087>

Danny noted they would send a survey to Commissioners to find out what subgroups Commissioners want to participate in.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:00pm.

Respectfully Submitted

Danny M. Cohen