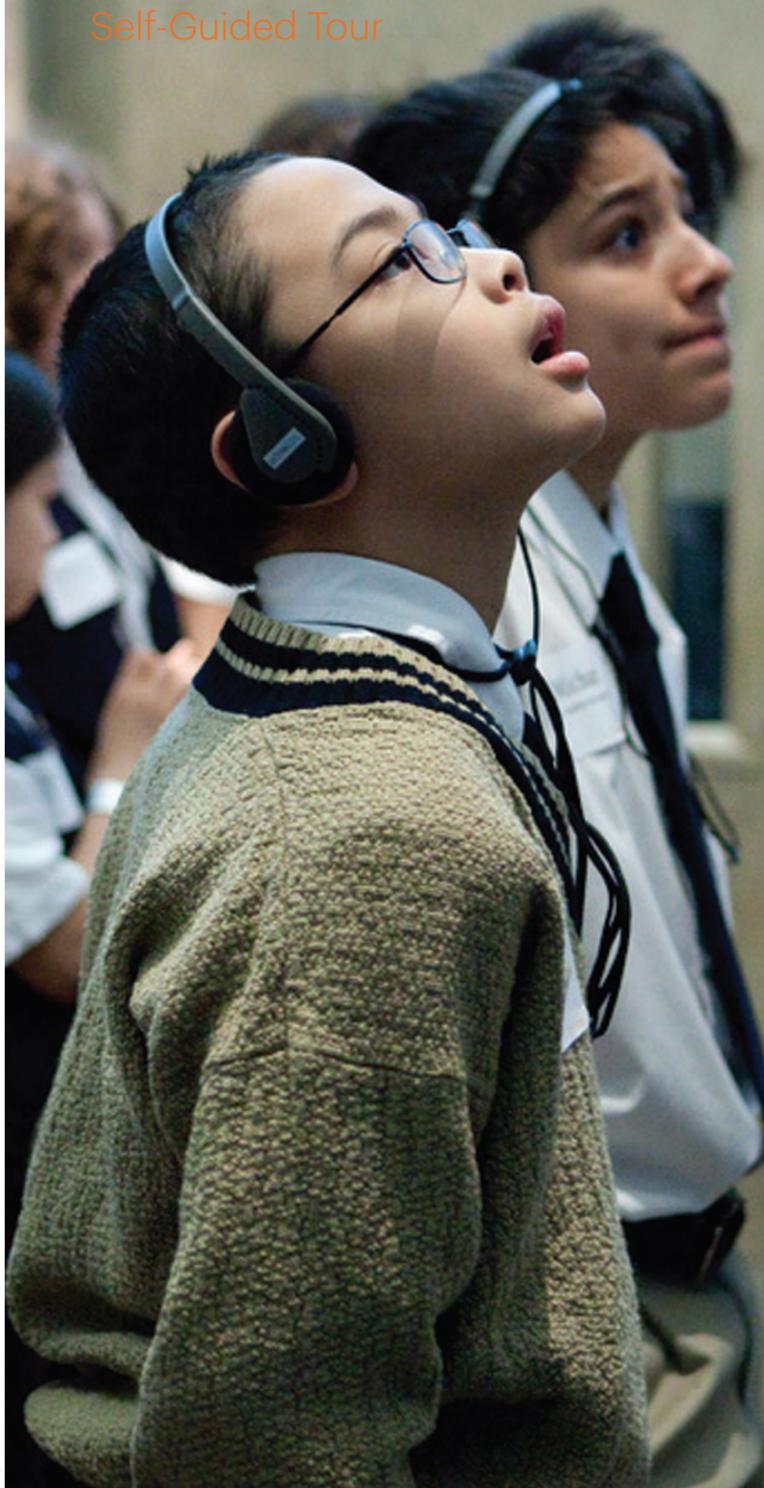




ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

# Karkomi Holocaust Exhibition

Self-Guided Tour



## 1. Introductory Film

Be introduced to local Survivors as they reflect on their experiences during the Holocaust.

## 2. Jewish Life Before World War II

Jewish life and community before the war was diverse. Notice **the walls on your right** depicting photos of typical family life, while **the walls on your left** reflect religious life.

## 3. Germany: A Fragile Democracy

After losing World War I, Germany suffered an economic and social depression in the late 1920s that set the stage for the rise of Nazism and Hitler's ascent.

## 4. Jewish Community Responds to Nazism 1933-1938

Germany enacted over 400 discriminatory laws and decrees against the Jews and other victims of Nazism.

**On the jagged walls to your right** is the first wave of Nazi anti-Jewish laws used to isolate Jews, make their lives increasingly unbearable, and convince them to "voluntarily" leave. **The curved walls on your left** show the Jewish response, bending but refusing to break. Many still believed that life would return to normal.

On October 5, 1938, all current German-Jewish passports were invalidated. All Jewish passports were stamped with an identifying red letter: "J." By January 1939, Jews with first names of "non-Jewish" origin had to add "Israel" if male, and "Sara" if female for easy identification. **See the far wall.**

## 5. Kristallnacht: The End of the Beginning, the Beginning of the End

For two-days, the Nazis unleashed an unprecedented assault on the Jewish communities of Germany, Austria, and the Sudetenland. These attacks became known as Kristallnacht—the "Night of Broken Glass."

With cooperation from the local population, police, and fire brigades, Nazis smashed windows, vandalized storefronts, burned down over 1,000 synagogues, and arrested 30,000 Jewish men and sent them to concentration camps. Panic-stricken, Jews searched for countries of refuge, but many had already closed their borders.

This night is often considered the end of the beginning, and

the beginning of the end, as it marked a new phase in the Nazis' assault against European Jewry. Kristallnacht was the first time overt violent action was taken against Jews based solely on religion, starting the genocide that is the Holocaust. **Step onto the stunning cracked glass floor** and watch the synagogue doors as projections of synagogues before and after Kristallnacht are shown.

## 6. World's Response 1933-1939

**Newspapers, headlines, and dates are displayed** in this area highlighting the coverage of Nazi violence. Kristallnacht convinced Jews of the need to emigrate, but restrictions from many countries, financial roadblocks, and German bureaucracy created obstacles.

## 7. Germany Invades and Occupies Europe

On September 1, 1939, Germany invaded Poland. Two days later, France and Britain declared war on Germany. World War II had begun. The Nazis conquered neighboring countries with two objectives: *Lebensraum*—living space for the "superior" Aryan population—and racial domination of non-Aryans. **The media on the wall** illustrates how rapidly the Nazis advanced and occupied Europe. **The lower right screen** shows the number of Jews living in Nazi-controlled areas.

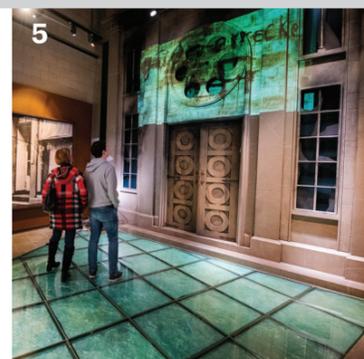
## 8. Mosaic of Victims

The Nazis targeted a diverse group of people that they considered racial, biological, political, or social threats or burdens on society. **The tiled wall** shows a photo of a "euthanasia" (mercy killing) facility at Hadamar where Nazis murdered their first victims: German people with physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities.

## 9. Nazi Ideology Spreads West

By occupying Western Europe, the Nazis used both military force and the cooperation of local populations to rapidly implement anti-Jewish laws that had taken years to establish within Germany. Jews throughout Nazi-occupied Europe were forced to wear identification badges in the form of a yellow star to humiliate and isolate them. **Note the yellow Stars of David and look behind the bookcase** that replicates the secret entrance where Anne Frank's family and others hid.

Turn over to continue >



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

# Don't miss all the Museum has to offer:

## Take a Stand Center

*Named one of the top exhibits worldwide by Smithsonian Magazine.*

The *Take a Stand Center* includes the world's first interactive, holographic Survivor Stories Experience Theater, followed by three galleries that guide visitors through social justice issues suggesting ways to take action.



## Make a Difference!

The *Harvey L. Miller Family Youth Exhibition* features fun, hands-on activities that empower young visitors to use their voices and make choices to stand up for themselves and others.



## Changing Exhibitions

Three exhibitions per year explore Holocaust stories and contemporary issues related to human rights and social justice.



## Stunning Architecture

World-renowned architect Stanley Tigerman infused each space in the Museum with stark structural elements, dramatic lighting, and symbolism.



*Abe & Ida Cooper Survivor Stories Experience* features Dimensions in Testimony, developed by USC Shoah Foundation's New Dimensions in Testimony program in association with Illinois Holocaust Museum.

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## 10. The Ghettos

More than two million Jews came under German control after the invasion of Poland. Realizing that “voluntary emigration” was impossible with so vast a population, the Germans adopted a policy of isolation and containment. For the Jews, ghetto life was one of squalor, hunger, disease, and despair. Yet even in the darkness of the ghettos, with the most limited resources, many Jews actively strove to maintain their dignity and humanity through cultural and spiritual resistance. **Notice the sloping cobblestone floor** as you descend further into the exhibition.

## 11. The “Final Solution” Begins: Mobile Killing Units

Germany’s invasion of the territories of the Soviet Union added more than five million Jews to those under Nazi control. The Nazis were no longer satisfied with their policy of ghettoization, and implemented a plan that called for the mass murder of all Jews, which became known as the “Final Solution.” Three thousand members of the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing squads) were sent from town to town to confiscate property and then systematically murder Jews, Roma, and others in mass shootings.

## 12. The “Final Solution”: Wannsee Conference

For 90 minutes, fifteen Nazi officials met to ensure the cooperation of various administrative departments in the implementation of the “Final Solution to the Jewish Question.” In addition to sending mobile killers to stationary victims, the murders became industrialized, and Jews were brought by railroad cars to stationary killing centers. **The chart on the wall** traces the number of Jews (11 million total) who were targeted in occupied-Europe and in countries yet to be conquered. **Folders** show the pre-war professions of the Nazi officials present at this meeting.

## 13. Deception

Deception was a major tool used to mislead victims and the world. **The glass wall** features several different euphemisms used by the Nazis to mask their intentions.

## 14. The “Final Solution”: Deportation to Killing Centers

**This circular area** marks the transition between the two buildings of the Museum. **Listen to Survivors’ personal accounts** of deportation and catch your first glimpse of the railcar.

## 15. Railcar

This is a typical rail car used during deportations, which might hold between 80 to 100 people for days. **You may choose to go inside or walk around the railcar.** You have the opportunity to make a choice, but remember victims did not.

## 16. Killing Centers

Between 1933 and 1945, more than 40,000 camps and internment sites were established in Nazi-occupied Europe. To facilitate the “Final Solution”, six of the camps were developed with a goal of mass murder. Many of these killing centers used gas chambers and crematoria, like the model in the middle of this room. Families were separated after arrival, and individuals were selected to work or die. **Look at the display of shoes** from the camps, a stark reminder of the millions of people killed during the Holocaust, and realize that each shoe belonged to a unique individual.

## 17. Jewish Armed Resistance

As deportations and rumors of death camps increased, Jews realized survival was almost impossible. They began to organize for an ultimate armed struggle against the Nazis, despite unequal resources, strength, and opportunities. Resistance in the ghettos, forests, and killing centers was meant to exact vengeance from the Nazis, and for Resisters to die fighting with honor. The ghetto uprising space, comprised of brick walls and archways, evokes an underground bunker occupied by resistance fighters. **Watch and listen** to the last letter written by a young Jewish Commander inside the Warsaw Ghetto. **Notice the immersive forest of architectural trees** as you enter the Bielski partisan camp and read excerpts from the diary of a young partisan fighter. The third gallery on resistance is quiet and stark, focusing on the revolts at Sobibor, Treblinka, and Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps.

## 18. Getting the Word Out/World Response

Knowing did not mean believing – and believing did not translate into action. A significant psychological shift was required for the world to comprehend the unprecedented scope of the Holocaust.

## 19. Rescuers

**On the right wall**, see how the collaboration of individuals, governments, institutions, and industries supporting anti-Jewish policy were critical to the implementation of genocidal policies throughout occupied Europe.

**Look at the right wall right wall and observe** several rescuers - including a diplomat, a business person, and a young teenage girl – who represent the exceptional few throughout occupied Europe who risked their lives to save Jews.

One rescuer, **Chiune-Sempo Sugihara**, Acting Consul for Japan in Kovno, Lithuania, issued over 2,100 visas to Polish refugees, most of them Jews, despite cables from the Japanese foreign ministry that requested he follow stricter procedures.

## 20. Death Marches

As the Allied armies advanced and Nazi defeat was inevitable, thousands of prisoners were forced to evacuate camps in the East on death marches toward the interior of the German Reich. Thousands died of exhaustion and exposure. **Note the map** that shows both the pre-war Jewish population and the number of Jews murdered. **The floor ascends** as you enter the “light side” of the exhibition.

## 21. Liberation

Allied forces who had come to defeat the Nazis did not expect to liberate prisoners. These battle-weary soldiers could not begin to imagine the horror of the camps nor the condition of their inmates. **The floor below** contains authentic artifacts and replicas of Nazi paraphernalia; walking on it represents the “stomping out” of Nazism.

## 22. Rebuilding Family and Community

When World War II ended, the Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust were free, but their homes were destroyed, and many of their family members and friends had been killed. They chose to look to the future, calling themselves the “Surviving Remnant.”

## 23. Seeking Justice

The United States, Great Britain, the USSR, and France established an international military tribunal that set, for the first time, binding legal criteria for prosecuting perpetrators of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and crimes against peace. Between 1945-1949, a series of additional trials took place in Nuremberg to try doctors, judges, businessmen, and high-level government officials. Many of those found guilty received short prison sentences or no penalty at all.

## 24-26. Departure and Arrival

**The right wall** contains artifacts of Jews immigrating to Israel, which was British-controlled Palestine at the time. **The left wall** shows Jews sailing to and arriving in America. Survivors were an integral part in the birth of the State of Israel, and contributed to mainstream American culture. View the walls of Survivors’ naturalization certificates and pull out the drawers to see items from four Survivors’ new lives in America.

## 27. Skokie: A Community Responds

“We Are Coming!” proclaimed an American Neo-Nazi group petitioning to march through Skokie in October 1976. “We Are Ready!” proclaimed the 7,000 Holocaust Survivors living in Skokie at the time. For Skokie’s Holocaust Survivors, this was a call to action. Legal efforts to block the march went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Three decades after the Holocaust, Survivors had become a vocal presence; they would not be silent again. **Look above to see posters** from the marches in 1977-78.

## 28. American Awakening/Freedom of Speech

In the decades following World War II, American awareness of the Holocaust grew steadily. **View the wall** of key events that brought the Holocaust to the forefront of political and ethical consciousness, nurturing Holocaust museums and memorials worldwide and preserving eyewitness testimony.

## 29. Pritzker Theatre Closing Film

The exhibit **closes with a short film** emphasizing the importance of learning from history and continuing to work towards the promise of “never again.”

