

# The Strategic Plan of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum



## SECURING THE LIVING LEGACY

Approved by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, 2002.  
Updated 2010.

UNITED STATES  
HOLOCAUST  
MEMORIAL  
MUSEUM

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YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

ISAIAH 43:10

## VISION

As a living memorial to the Holocaust, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum envisions a world in which people confront hatred, prevent genocide, and promote human dignity.

## MISSION\*

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is America's national institution for the documentation, study, and interpretation of Holocaust history, and serves as this country's memorial to the millions of people murdered during the Holocaust.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims—six million were murdered; Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or decimation for racial, ethnic, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

The Museum's primary mission is to advance and disseminate knowledge about this unprecedented tragedy, to preserve the memory of those who suffered, and to encourage its visitors to reflect upon the moral and spiritual questions raised by the events of the Holocaust as well as their own responsibilities as citizens of a democracy.

Chartered by a unanimous Act of Congress in 1980 and opened on April 26, 1993, adjacent to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., the Museum strives to broaden public understanding of the history of the Holocaust through multifaceted programs: exhibitions; research and publication; collecting and preserving material evidence, art, and artifacts related to the Holocaust; annual Holocaust commemorations known as Days of Remembrance; distribution of educational materials and teacher resources; and a variety of public programming designed to enhance understanding of the Holocaust and related issues, including those of contemporary significance.

\*As approved by the United States Holocaust Memorial Council on June 24, 1993.

PHOTO CREDITS: COVER (FROM LEFT) CARL COX FOR U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM; U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM; CARL COX FOR U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM; (ABOVE) U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM.

## BACKGROUND

**“the Commission recommends establishment of a living memorial that will speak not only of the victims’ deaths but of their lives, a memorial that can transform the living by transmitting the legacy of the Holocaust.”**

—*Report of the President’s Commission on the Holocaust*; Elie Wiesel, Chairman, September 1979

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is a *living* memorial—it recalls the past for the sake of the future. It is a far-reaching institution where Holocaust remembrance and education have an impact on American society and the world, where the lessons of history aim to influence the conscience of humanity. It is a memorial and a museum, an education center and a cause, but it is fundamentally about a powerful conviction—that the legacy of the Holocaust has the potential to transform the present and the future. The strategic plan addresses how this living memorial can secure its national and international stature, influence, and resources, and achieve deeper, more enduring impact on individuals, perhaps eventually on society as a whole. Rooted in the mission statement, the plan encompasses two strategic goals that will continue guiding the institution:

### **Protect and Strengthen the Core and Impact of the Living Memorial Secure the Future of the Memorial Museum**

These goals are interdependent. Neither is possible without effective governance, leadership, and management; high accountability; well-functioning systems; and adequate resources, including funding, staffing, and space.

## WHY THESE GOALS?

**In the first decade our responsibility was...**

**To create a Memorial Museum that would pay meaningful tribute to the memory of all of the victims and present Holocaust history in a way that would resonate broadly in our pluralistic democracy.**

The Museum was created through an extraordinary partnership among Holocaust survivors, donors, presidents of the United States, and the Congress. This living memorial was the dream of a few visionaries, and that original dream has long been exceeded. The Museum and the event it memorializes have become part of our dialogue about freedom and justice, have achieved national and international standing, and have helped humanity in its search for a moral compass.

The lessons of the Holocaust have found remarkable resonance with people from all walks of life. The institution’s centrality and credibility have been affirmed by the tens of millions who have visited the Museum and its traveling exhibitions, participated in its educational programs, and used its Web site. Over the first decade, the institution solidified its standing, as demonstrated by the willingness of so many around the world to entrust it with archival records and personal artifacts of the Holocaust; permanent authorization from the U.S. Congress; federal appropriations of \$280 million; and \$430 million in private donations (including a \$200 million capital campaign that built the Museum and created an initial endowment as well as annual funding of \$230 million for operations).

The Memorial Museum’s initial success led to rapid growth as it created a broad array of programs frequently in response to public demand. There were extraordinary accomplishments across a diverse set of activities and audiences. It became clear that the Museum could do many things well; it was now time to bring strategic focus to its efforts in order to maximize educational impact. Clear institutional direction and corresponding strategic criteria were necessary in order to develop sustained relationships through meaningful programs designed

to have lasting impact. To safeguard the institution's future and realize its extraordinary capacity as a global force, the Museum needed a strategic plan.

### **Now our responsibility is...**

**To assure that the Museum remains a living memorial, that the lessons of the Holocaust—lessons about moral responsibility, the fragility and importance of democracy, the dangers of antisemitism and racism, and the need to prevent genocide—not only are learned, but also embraced by new generations.**

Today the survivors bear witness and give voice to the silenced victims. As the Holocaust recedes in time, the Museum must preserve and transmit those memories and sustain that authenticity for future generations. Safeguarding the memory and meaning of the Holocaust—including the memory of the culture that perished—requires a partnership bridging survivors and successor generations, especially those whose roles are central to fostering society's humane values and democratic principles.

Although a visionary few had long recognized the need for and importance of a national memorial, it was only after the Museum opened that many people began to understand the full power of its moral premise. Prior to opening, few could have predicted its impact on the American public and the world.

For nearly two decades the institution has been transforming memory into action, each year engaging millions, inspiring them to act on the core lesson of the Holocaust: individual actions always matter. In so doing, the Museum is addressing some of the most challenging issues of our time—increasing threats to democratic values, rising ethnic hatred and antisemitism, and continuing genocide.

Equally important is the vast and diverse audience the Museum reaches. More than 31 million people from all over the world have visited, including more than 9 million school children and 91 heads of state. Ninety percent of the Museum's visitors are not Jewish, and its multilingual Web site, [www.ushmm.org](http://www.ushmm.org), the world's leading online authority on the Holocaust, is visited by people from an average of 100 different countries every day.

The Museum fulfilled the short-term strategies of the plan. Selected accomplishments include:

- Advancing the Rescue the Evidence initiative through our partnership with [Father Patrick Desbois](#); opening the [International Tracing Service](#); collecting rare witness, collaborator, and perpetrator testimonies
- Establishing and expanding the National Institute for Holocaust Education, [Center for Advanced Holocaust Studies](#), and [Committee on Conscience](#)
- Launching three theme-based initiatives—[antisemitism](#), [propaganda](#), and collaboration
- Expanding leadership programming for law enforcement, government, military, judges, and teachers
- Expanding our online presence—Web, [Google Earth](#), Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Podcasts, etc.
- Completing the [Genocide Prevention Task Force Report](#)
- Revitalizing fundraising; creating a marketing program

In addition, significant world events have transformed our work—e.g., 9/11, globalization, the growth of the Internet and new technologies, resurgent antisemitism and Holocaust denial, the situations in Darfur, Sudan, and Congo, and the recession. All of this when we are approaching a time when Holocaust survivors and other eyewitnesses will no longer be with us.

Our accomplishments, coupled with this changed environment, called for updating the short-term goals of the strategic plan. In doing so, we asked the following questions:

**What must we do to assure that the memory of the dead truly affects the living? What must we do that no other Holocaust organization is prepared to do or able to accomplish? What is our role in today's globalized society?** The collections, expertise, programs, and resources we have built are an inadequate memorial if we do not continue to achieve significant global impact. We must decide how to balance our responsibility to provide direct services and programs in the near term with our obligation as stewards of memory for the long term. How do we manage the responsibility to preserve the Memorial Museum facility and its educational impact, recognizing the challenges of attracting new visitation and knowing that our mandate requires us to serve a broader global audience? How can we best secure the core foundation of knowledge and the collection, build strength for the future, and invest in infrastructure? Given changes in communications technologies, what are the new opportunities for telling our history? Recognizing that we are in the last era in which survivors and eyewitnesses will be among us, how do we maximize their presence and value in our work? What is the unrealized potential of the institution?

**How can we sustain growth, increasing both impact and financial support? Which audiences and constituencies are most critical to the institution's continued vitality?** Federal support, which funds basic building operations, has been static; private funds, which support educational outreach, have been diminished by an increasingly competitive philanthropic environment and by the recession. Sustaining the Museum's impact requires (1) the long-term support of key constituencies, (2) a substantial annual stream of private funding and annual Congressional appropriations, (3) expanding our base of support, and (4) a significantly larger endowment. The Memorial Museum must remain a vital, unique institution if it is to continue engaging public interest and raising significant funds from its supporters.

**How do we sustain long-term programmatic effectiveness in a federal memorial museum of international stature, based on a public-private partnership, which deals with a subject of such magnitude as the Holocaust? How do we maintain the appropriate balance between Holocaust memory and the universal application of the lessons of the Holocaust?** Tensions may be inevitable given the Museum's various components, such as the institution's mission to transform memory into action, its public-private partnership, and the enormous significance of the Holocaust. But the Memorial Museum will succeed by remaining faithful to its mission and maintaining the confidence of its key constituencies.

**How do we assure high performance and demonstrate to our constituencies that the Museum is well led and managed, that it is worthy of support, that every dollar is well spent? How do we balance our commitment to our plans with unanticipated opportunities or needs? How do we improve our capacity to demonstrate strategic direction with measurable outcomes?** There must be efficient management systems to deliver programs and assure accountability; high standards must be pervasive; strong governance processes and a solid operating model, including performance measures, must be in place; and the institution must have the transparency to retain supporters' confidence.

**The Museum has a responsibility to the past—to history and memory—and it has a responsibility to future generations whose lives it can influence. As the leader in the field of Holocaust studies and education and a global force for confronting hatred, preventing genocide, and promoting human dignity, the Museum must sustain what has been achieved, but it must also do more if it is to fulfill its responsibilities and its potential.**



## INSTITUTIONAL VALUES AND PRINCIPLES

Our institutional values must guide our decisions. Our core principles are:

1. The Museum is a **memorial to the victims of the Holocaust**. Everything we do should honor their memory.
2. Our mission and vision require us to perform our roles with **integrity and respect for others** at all times.
3. Our most precious assets are **our people, our collections, and our reputation**. People must be respected; collections must be preserved and made available; and our reputation must be protected at all times.
4. As a memorial to the Holocaust, we will conduct our operations and programs with **dignity and understatement**.
5. We are an **American institution**, mandated by the American government, built and supported by the American people. As such, we have an obligation to present the history of the Holocaust and other genocides with a special emphasis on America's role, American responsibility, and American values.
6. To be as effective as possible, we will strive for **excellence, creativity, teamwork, imagination, and innovation**.
7. As a public-private partnership, we will perform our work with accountability, efficiency, and at the highest levels of **public service**.

## THE CHALLENGE—STRATEGIC CHOICES AND INVESTMENTS

As with all institutions, the Museum faces the reality of limitations. We must make strategic choices. There are always more opportunities and needs than resources. If the Museum is to fulfill its mission, it requires strategic focus to ensure that the *quality and power of its message* remain the highest priority.

**While a compelling case can always be made for a wide variety of important endeavors, not every worthwhile Holocaust program can be the Museum's program.**

- The question is not what is needed or advocated, but what must be done by this institution and done now.
- While the institution must always be appropriately responsive, a strategic rather than reactive approach is key to ensuring that the Museum maximizes its ability to have substantial impact.

**Current funding is flat. Tight financial management and stronger fundraising are essential.**

- Rising costs and increased audience demand exceed the growth of federal funds and private support. Growing the Museum requires disciplined financial management, substantial attention to development, and strong Council and managerial leadership.
- New initiatives must be supported by reallocating resources (funds, staff) from existing programs and by raising new dollars.

**Choices and investments must be driven by:**

- Legacy and Impact—what is fundamental, meaningful, transformative, and lasting?
- Stewardship—what secures the legacy and its impact for future generations?
- Timeliness—what must be done now that cannot be missed or deferred? What are we uniquely positioned to do?

**Our plan must be bold. Our responsibility does not allow otherwise.**

# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

To ensure the Museum's ongoing resonance as the Holocaust recedes in time, we must secure its stature, influence, and resources by focusing on these institutional imperatives and short-term objectives and strategies:

## PERMANENT INSTITUTIONAL IMPERATIVES

### Remembrance and Education

- Preservation of the memory of the victims of the Holocaust
- Global awareness of the Holocaust
- Quality Holocaust education in American secondary schools and higher education
- The Holocaust as a vital field of academic study in the United States and abroad

### Applying the Lessons of the Holocaust

- Professions that safeguard society understand the lessons of the Holocaust and the implications for their roles and responsibilities and act on them
- An engaged citizenry that understands the lessons of the Holocaust and the implications for their roles and responsibilities and acts on them
- Effective response to contemporary antisemitism and Holocaust denial grounded in our mandate to preserve Holocaust memory and prevent genocide
- Effective genocide prevention and response

# THE STRATEGIC PLAN

## SHORT-TERM GOALS AND STRATEGIES

### Protect and Strengthen the Core and Impact of the Living Memorial

#### Rescuing the Evidence

- Address gaps in evidence on victims, witnesses, collaborators, and perpetrators
- Improve accessibility of collections
- Secure a facility for future growth of the collection

#### Expanding, Diversifying, and More Effectively Engaging Our Audiences

- Refresh the Permanent Exhibition; redo the Web site; and employ new technologies
- Implement a national programming plan to strengthen constituency relationships and build new audiences in order to expand our presence and impact in key cities and regions
- Refine and implement plans for targeted audiences to achieve greatest systemic impact and change
- Enhance the Museum's global presence

### Secure the Future of the Memorial Museum

- Build the endowment to \$400 million
- Build a program for foundation and corporate fundraising
- Improve stewardship of key constituencies (survivors, donors, Council, former Council, Congress)
- Further strengthen governance processes
- Implement strategies for improved human capital management

**It's up to you now, and we shall help you—  
that my past does not become your future.**

—Elie Wiesel