From Massachusetts to Ravensbrück: Betty Laurie, the United States, and the Holocaust

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Betty Laurie, the United States, and the Holocaust.

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For the dead and the living we must bear witness—Elie Wiesel
The question I am asked most often is *Why study the Holocaust?* I have no familial connection, no cultural connection, and no religious connection to this event. I was born many decades after the liberation of the concentration camps, and know of no one in my life who was directly impacted by the Holocaust. In contrast, many historians who have and are studying the Holocaust have these connections, and it is through those connections they are able to share their stories and educate others. I, on the other hand, am only equipped with what I was taught in school and my own curiosity. As both a young historian and someone with no direct link, I had to build my own connections.

For decades, the Holocaust has been a widely studied event across the globe. From an early age, children in American schools are taught of the Nazi horrors and persecution of the Jews. Year after year, images displaying the atrocities are plastered on screens and in books in an attempt to demonstrate just how horrific this event was. I remember feeling utterly horrified when reading the stories and hearing of the death and destruction. One would think that would have been enough to demonstrate the severity and importance of this event. Alas, the level of details and descriptions of the Holocaust dramatically increased the older I became. Yet underneath all of that, it was the same story. Nazi brutality and persecution of the Jews. There had to be more, right?

There was in fact so much more to the story. In my junior year of my undergraduate degree, I took a course called America and the Holocaust. This by far has been one of the toughest yet most meaningful courses I have ever taken. It was there I had to begin to challenge what I had previously learned about the Holocaust. It was not as simple as Nazi brutality and persecution of the Jews. This was a far more messy confluence of events that happened over the
course of many years. Victims were not limited to the Jews, but included Roma and Sinti, Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, Homosexuals, political prisoners, disabled persons—the list goes on and on.

One victim of the Nazi persecution I had stumbled across was an American woman by the name of Roberta (Betty) Laurie. For our final paper, we were tasked with analyzing newspaper articles from the time period to determine what information was being presented to the American public and the action taken as a result. The deadline was fast approaching and I was scrambling to finish the assignment on time. Among the mound of newspaper articles I had scattered on my floor, one in particular stood out. The headline read, “Stoughton Countess Tells of Prison Camp Escape.” Along with my final paper, I sent a copy of the article to my professor. Neither one of us had heard Betty’s story before, but we were both in agreement that it needed to be shared.

Finally, I had found my connection. Not through culture, religion, or personal experience, but through Betty. Her story raised important questions about American involvement in the Holocaust and the country’s memory of that monumental event. Despite not playing a direct role in the event itself, the United States has prioritized the remembrance of it. But memory can be selective. How has the United States remembered the Holocaust? What has been omitted from public memory? Betty’s story was able to help me find that answer. It is important to note that Betty Laurie was not a victim of the Holocaust. She was not Jewish and she was not killed in the camps. And yet, this American woman suffered greatly at the hands of the Nazis during her time in the Ravensbrück concentration camp, and endured quite similar experiences to victims of the Holocaust. So where does she fit into U.S. memory? I believe that Betty Laurie’s story will help explain how the Holocaust is remembered, illustrate how Americans have created boundaries between what is and is not considered the Holocaust, and perhaps even expand those boundaries.
America has chosen to remember the Holocaust in such a very specific way. There is much to be learned from the articles, books, memorials, and museums throughout the country, yet there is still more to the story than what is shown. This information is vital to the overall understanding of the Holocaust. Public memory currently dictates the Jewish lives that suffered as a result of the Nazi atrocities are of the upmost importance. Yet, there were so many more that suffered the same fate. Betty Laurie is one of many who I believe deserve to be remembered.

Introduction

Six million Jews were murdered during the Holocaust.¹ This is the number that defines this event in history. The men, women, and children who perished did not matter to Adolf Hitler and the Nazis. On their quest for expansion and Aryanization, what began as strong antisemitism turned deadly—even genocidal. But what about the others? The murdering and persecution of the Jewish people is beyond tragedy, and has affected society decades after the event. Jews, however, were not the only victims of the Nazis. They are often described as the six million Jews and “others.” Who are these people? What are their stories? Many of them have similar stories and experiences to Jewish victims, but there is a long-standing debate whether they are victims of the Holocaust or just Nazi brutality. Already we see that there are boundaries. One could see the Holocaust as the 12 million, or the 6 million. In order to see how the U.S. has remembered the Holocaust, this paper will look beyond the conventional boundaries.

Those victimized by the Nazis that fall under the category of “other” stagger in the millions. Soviets, Non-Jewish Poles, Serbian civilians, those with disabilities, Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Asocials,Homosexuals, and even members of the French Resistance— anyone who defied the Nazi party was condemned to the camps, and many of those eventually killed.\(^2\) And while many did perish alongside their Jewish counterparts, some did survive. Roberta (Betty) Laurie, an American-French Resistance fighter and Massachusetts citizen, was one of those survivors. She was not Jewish, yet endured similar conditions to those who were Jewish during her time at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. Upon liberation, she remained active in the community of Holocaust survivors to share her story and educate. But Betty Laurie is not a “household name” like others, such as Anne Frank or Elie Wiesel. A number of factors may help to explain why that is. Religion, race, country of origin are all plausible explanations, but something else worth considering is how the story of the Holocaust is told. In telling the story of the Holocaust, historians and others define boundaries—they select and omit certain information. If the story told is about the Nazi persecution of the Jews, there is no need for an American citizen like Betty Laurie to be included. While the omittance or inclusion of certain groups may seem logical, exploring these boundaries allows us to learn much about the Holocaust and memorialization of this tragedy.

American involvement during the Holocaust was quite limited. There was much sympathy among Americans for the suffering and plight of the Nazi victims. However, that did not seem to be the country’s greatest concern. Military victory was prioritized over humanitarian efforts, domestic concerns combined with a wave of antisemitism and xenophobia took precedence, and

only a relatively small number of refugees were permitted to enter the country. Yet the United States took on a responsibility for the remembrance and memorialization of the Holocaust after World War II. As time moved forward, memorials and museums were constructed all throughout the country. Education, memorialization, and remembrance have been the primary objectives, resulting in the legacy of the Holocaust embedding itself within American culture. And while that is important, the information that is being presented to the public is of much importance as well. Who decides what should be known? More importantly, how do these boundaries influence our perspective on the Holocaust? The answers to those questions are not as simple as one would hope, and have been the object of debate amongst historians for decades.

It is important to define first and foremost what a boundary is in this context. Author and historian Edward T. Linenthal explains in his book *Preserving Memory* that “commemorative sensibility and educational imperative, appropriate institutional civility, and public reassurance” were elements all considered when deciding what information on the Holocaust would be shared with the public. Like most events throughout history, the Holocaust is not a black and white event. It is indeed unique, and the desire to commemorate occasionally clashed with the desire to present an accurate and moving historical narrative.³ Museums, such as the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C., had to consider boundaries in the construction of their institution, for example the boundaries of horror and inclusion. Museums and historical remembrance sites are not limited to just those two boundaries however. In fact, there are many things to consider in regards to remembrance of historical events. The remembrance of the Holocaust encounters these boundaries quite frequently, and as such, may alter the interpretation and understanding of the event overall. Some historians may disagree on

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the matter, and they are right to do so. These disagreements are not to be looked down upon and criticized. Here I argue that boundaries are vital to not only the remembrance of the Holocaust as a historical event, but *how* we remember it as well.

The actions of the United States during the Second World War and the Holocaust broke a long tradition of U.S. neutrality toward European affairs. Why was the United States so entangled in this event, and why does the country today place such a huge emphasis on the legacy of the Holocaust? The life of Betty Laurie, both a woman from Massachusetts and a prisoner of the Ravensbrück concentration camp, provides insight into the U.S. experience and encounter with the Holocaust. In addition, she also illustrates the consequences of many of the boundaries that shape the way the U.S. remembers the Holocaust. Since she does not fall under the criteria of what a Holocaust victim is to be considered, there is little room for her in U.S. remembrance. This shows us that the remembrance and legacy of the Holocaust in the United States has to fit certain criteria to be considered shareable and important. In addition, I argue Betty Laurie's story is not one to sweep under the rug or tuck away. Her story highlights crucial information regarding U.S. remembrance of the Holocaust, and may even challenge previous ideas on public memory.

This paper will examine these ideas by analyzing essential primary sources from the United States Holocaust Memorial Archive and the University of Michigan Special Collections Archive. Betty Laurie did not leave behind many sources about her time at the Ravensbrück concentration camp, so I draw on similar experiences from women in similar circumstances in order to infer what she endured there. Other historians' work and arguments will be consulted as well, analyzing the most recent secondary sources in relation to this topic. Finally, in order to truly understand how the U.S. has memorialized the Holocaust, I analyze both memorials and
Background: The Holocaust

Before any arguments or assumptions can be made, it is important to understand what the Holocaust is. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum located in Washington, D.C., defines the Holocaust (1933-1945) as “the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million European-Jews by the Nazi German regime and its allies and collaborators.”

Sounds simple enough, right? Wrong. Simplicity is not a word that describes this event. The Holocaust was a complex event that seemingly becomes increasingly more complex the more one studies it. With the understanding that this event took place in human history, one can begin to understand what the people in this world are truly capable of.

Before the outbreak of World War II, there was much tension building across the globe. When Adolf Hitler rose to power as Chancellor of Germany on January 30, 1933, antisemitism and violence toward the Jewish population was tremendously high. It was his belief that all those who were Jewish were evil, and the world had to be cleansed for a superior Aryan race—a master race. And as head of the Nazi party, he would be able to accomplish this goal.

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In the years leading up to the war, there was no shortage of antisemitism and violence against the Jews of Germany. Boycotts, legislation, and forced emigration were only some of the many struggles they endured before the outbreak of the war. Perhaps one of the most famous open acts of aggression toward German Jews was Kristallnacht, the “night of broken glass”. On the night of November 9-10, 1938, people took to the streets of Germany, recently annexed Austria, and the Sudetenland. As the name suggests, they shattered the glass windows of many Jewish shops, rioting and wreaking havoc. These were not the first targets of attack, however. Synagogues, the sites of Jewish religious and communal life and “visible manifestations of Jewish presence,” were attacked first. One of the ways in which the Germans demonstrated this aggression was through the public destruction of the Torah. They would rip up the religious text, and scatter the shreds on the streets for German Jews to bear witness.

Anti-Jewish aggression and antisemitism continued to increase as the 1930s came to an end. On January 30, 1939, Hitler addressed the German public, outlining what a war would mean for European Jewry:

If the international Finance-Jewry inside and outside of Europe should succeed in plunging the peoples of the earth once again into a world war, the result will be not the Bolshevization of earth, and thus a Jewish victory, but the annihilation of the Jewish race in Europe.

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7 Ibid.
8 Wall Text, “Night of Broken Glass,” The Holocaust Exhibit, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
A few months later, on September 1, 1939, the war in Europe broke out. Hitler and the Nazi Party would finally be able to make their plans for mass genocide a reality. But what did this mean for the European Jews? It meant their troubles had yet to truly begin.

The outbreak of the war signified that things were getting more serious. The Germans began to take Jews, especially Polish Jews, and round them up into ghettos in a process known as ghettoization.\(^\text{10}\) While the goal for the Germans was to isolate Jews and use ghettos as a holding place until their next step, those who were forced into the ghettos still found a way to continue Jewish life.\(^\text{11}\) And while they remained there, the Germans began preparations to liquidate the ghettos, sending the residents to either concentration camps or the newly constructed extermination camps in 1939.

In the same year, the war across Europe broke out, the Nazi shift towards the “final solution” of the Jewish problem had begun. The systematic killings of the disabled and impaired began in October 1939 in Hitler’s euthanasia program, and experts have since claimed this step was vital to the establishment and operation of the extermination camps. Soon after in December 1941 did the death camps officially begin to operate, Chelmno being the first. Five more were later established: Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Majdanek. The Nazis’ primary method used to exterminate their victims at these camps was with Zyklon B or Carbon Monoxide in gas chambers. Some camps that had been previously established had been converted to killing centers as well. And while not as effective as extermination camps, the Nazis were still able to successfully exterminate multitudes of victims at the concentration camps. In June 1944, the Ravensbrück concentration camp documented its first gassing. Other camps were

converted in similar fashion—Stutthof, Mauthausen, and Sachsenhausen—with the intention to murder those the Nazis deemed “unfit” to work.\textsuperscript{12}

With each passing year, the situation for the Jews grew more bleak. As the Allies continued to secure victories, the Germans began to evacuate the camps and send the prisoners on what was known as a “death march.” This began in the fall of 1944 and continued into early 1945, up until the German surrender on May 8, 1945.\textsuperscript{13} These marches had many prisoners wishing they were dead, as conditions were beyond the point of inhumane.\textsuperscript{14} In the final stages of the war, as the Germans began to slowly accept defeat, what was left of the camps had been liberated by the Allies. What came next after liberation was a world of displacement and confusion. People had no place to go as antisemitism was still strong throughout the world, and many countries did not want to admit refugees. One such country was the United States.

Background: America and the Holocaust

The United States involvement in the Holocaust was quite limited. The country did not take direct part in the atrocities committed, but it was aware of them. The actions taken as a result of such information and involvement have been the center of debate both in the political and public sphere. Historian and author Barry Trachtenberg gives perspective on the Holocaust and U.S. participation in his book \textit{The United States and the Nazi Holocaust}. Once U.S. troops entered the war on December 11, 1941, the tides turned in favor of the Allies. In the final years of the fight, continuous victories from 1944 to 1945 sent the Germans running back across Europe with the

\textsuperscript{14} Bergen, \textit{War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust}, 290.
Allies close on their heels. As the Allies continued their pursuit of the German forces, they found and bore witness to the Nazi concentration and death camps. Upon seeing the atrocities committed, Allied soldiers were swift to begin liberating the prisoners.

The U.S. Army had liberated the Buchenwald, Dora-Mittelbau, Flossenburg, and Dachau camps in April 1945, and the Mauthausen camp in May 1945. Film footage taken at Buchenwald and Dachau by Norman Krasna, a captain in an American Air Force Unit, shows just how inhumane the camps were. Footage shows bodies upon bodies piled across the camp grounds, images of men with their heads bashed into the ground, and survivors who resemble living skeletons. The Americans had forced German men to clear the bodies at Dachau, and footage shows the corpses getting stuck on one another in a large pile before being thrown into carts. Krasna assures viewers this is no mere exaggeration. American medics at Buchenwald are shown in complete shock at what they are witnessing.\textsuperscript{15} Along with the smell, the sights and sounds of what happened brought to the world a whole new definition to inhumane. American liberators were quick to state in their reports given of the conditions of the camps that everything they had seen were truly represented. The insistence upon the veracity of these reports and images are quite significant. No one on earth at the time would have seen something so awful, and without proof, might have trouble believing humans were capable of committing such violence.

Prior to liberation, in the years leading up to the war, Trachtenberg illustrated President Roosevelt’s and the country’s reluctance to allow an influx of Jewish immigrants into the country. This was evident from the famous journey of the \textit{St. Louis} in 1939.\textsuperscript{16} This became

\textsuperscript{15} RG-60.4914, Tape 2881, “Krasna Collection,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, gift of Beth Krasna.

\textsuperscript{16} In 1939, for 35 days, the MS \textit{St. Louis} made its way across the Atlantic with a ship full of immigrants hoping to flee the Nazi regime in Germany. Once reaching the Americas, it was promptly turned away and sent back to Europe. Many of those on board hopping to escape the Nazi persecution who had to return back to Europe would soon perish in the events of the Holocaust.
symbolic of American indifference to the German Jews who were seeking safety from the Nazi oppression, and led to many criticisms of the Roosevelt administration for not doing more on behalf of the European Jewry. A similar ideology carried over in postwar America.

In the immediate postwar years, the United States had no official refugee policy. This resulted in many refugees fleeing postwar Europe to be counted under the quotas for immigrants, resulting in a new category entitled Displaced Persons (DPs). In the words of Trachtenberg, this “referred to people who had been uprooted by the war and were unable to return home.” Holocaust survivors in both Europe and in the United States faced a cold reception after the end of World War II. Antisemitism and race still played a huge role in public and governmental opinions, and the assistance that needed to be provided to the influx of refugees caused tension among Americans.\footnote{Barry Trachtenberg, \textit{The United States and the Nazi Holocaust} (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 92.}

For both the Americans sitting at home and on Capitol Hill, the public and politicians knew of the actions taken by the Nazi Germans. Government reports and popular media reported the atrocities occurring from the outbreak of the war up until the end in 1945, yet there was very little action taken. As a result, President Roosevelt took quite significant, while also limited, action in response to Nazism and the atrocities committed by the regime. While his focus was primarily on domestic concerns at the time, he had more courage than most other world leaders when faced with the Jewish question. 1938 was an election year in the United States, and in order to be reelected, Roosevelt felt he needed to take some course of action. To sway voters, a large gesture he took was recalling the U.S. ambassador after the events of \textit{Kirstallnacht}. This was both significant and symbolic, as he was the only world leader to do this. When the war broke out, he continued with these smaller yet significant gestures. As Jews fled from Germany,
he would occasionally let a number of Jewish refugees into the United States. He even proposed the Wagner-Rogers bill, which would have allowed 20,000 children into the country. Even after much congressional debate, it never came to vote.\textsuperscript{18} Since Roosevelt did not keep any personal diaries or journals during his life, it is difficult to gauge his exact thoughts on the matter. Many believe Roosevelt did all he could to save the Jews and bring an end to Nazism, while others believe he could have done more.

The American people on the other hand, seemed to be in agreement on the issue as a whole. In a public opinion poll given by the American Institute of Public Opinion in November 1938, 94 percent of people disapproved of the Nazi treatment of the Jews in Germany.\textsuperscript{19} However in 1939, Americans’ focus shifted towards the war effort. There was still much sympathy for the plight of the European Jews, but not enough to take significant action. Popular films in Hollywood shifted focus from themes of Nazism in the 1930’s to the fight for freedom and democracy in the 1940’s. War propaganda in the media was popular as well, as seen in Marvel’s “Captain America” comics and anti-Hitler political cartoons drawn by Dr. Seuss. Many newspapers across the country were quick to report on the Nazi atrocities throughout the war years as well, allowing the American public to remain up to date and knowledgeable on the events unfolding in Europe. The coverage on what would in later decades be called the Holocaust was quite extensive, especially in the later years of the war. It was more common to see articles of the camps and survivors accounts within the front pages of the papers, as opposed to years prior, when they were hidden in the back pages. They spared little detail when


\textsuperscript{19} Interactive Wall Display, “Public Opinion Poll, November 1939,” Americans and The Holocaust Exhibit, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
describing the atrocities the victims endured, going so far as to compare it with the days of Nero.\textsuperscript{20}

It is evident both the American government and people knew what was happening in Europe at the time, and that they understood the actions taken by the Nazis as wrong. It is important to note though, that even with the knowledge of the atrocities, the public at the time did not fully believe and comprehend the full extent of the Nazi’s actions. How could they? No one had ever seen this level of violence before. The crimes committed by the Nazis exemplified just how cruel human beings could be. However, the actions taken by the United States do not quite reflect that sentiment. The American people, while sympathetic, strongly disagreed on the matter of allowing refugees into the country. And even for those individuals who still wanted to help, sponsoring people to come to the United States was quite expensive—more than the average American presumably had due to the lasting effects of the Great Depression years earlier.

Roosevelt was quite involved in foreign affairs at this time, but his primary focus was domestic concerns. He feared antisemitic backlash from the public and showed great reluctance when the refugee crisis arose. Could Roosevelt have done more? Should he have done more? These questions have been the subject of much debate over the years. And while there has never truly been one definitive answer, who is to say if Roosevelt and America changed their actions it would have done any good?

Insights on this debate have been illustrated from both the historians Richard Breitman and Allan J. Lichtman in their book \textit{FDR and the Jews}. Both Lichtman and Breitman show Roosevelt

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\item \textsuperscript{20} “Men, Women Guards Enjoyed the Torture of Belsen Prisoners,” \textit{The Boston Daily Globe}, April 25, 1945, 3. Nero was the fifth emperor of Rome, known for his cruelty and atrocities towards Roman citizens.
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as a consummate politician struggling with opposing priorities under perilous conditions.

Ultimately, while he had done more than any other world politician for the European Jews, he was worried his measures to assist European Jews might endanger his political coalition at home and then wartime alliance abroad. This led to him maneuvering to help the Jews behind the scenes rather than upfront. Each phase of his presidency seemed to result in a different result to the Jewish issues: Roosevelt was first a bystander to the Nazi persecution; he then ministered to Jewish concerns; next he prioritized foreign policy, internal security, and military concerns above the Jewish plight; and finally he addressed the Jewish issue with a newly revised interest. He managed to save thousands of lives, yet many still condemn his actions. The disputes over FDR’s action taken in response to the Nazi atrocities have influenced the way the U.S. ultimately remembers the Holocaust.

Knowing the timeline of what happened is important, but the understanding of it is of far greater importance. Historian Doris L. Bergen offers four main points for the understanding of the Holocaust in her book War & Genocide: A Concise History of the Holocaust. First, she explains the Holocaust was a global event. It was also a transnational event, meaning it transcended national boundaries. It was not limited to just that of Germany or Poland—every country felt the effects of what happened to some extent. Second, the Holocaust happened step by step. Rome was not built in a day, and there is no possible way to wipe out an entire population of people overnight. The process occurred gradually over time. Third, the Holocaust needs to be understood in the context of the conflict. It is well known the events of the Holocaust coincided with the Second World War. Without it, the Holocaust most likely would not have

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21 Breitman and Lichtman, FDR and the Jews, 2.
22 Breitman and Lichtman, FDR and the Jews, 3.
happened. Finally, more groups were targeted than just the Jews.\textsuperscript{23} Those with disabilities, homosexuals, Roma, Jehovah’s witnesses, prisoners of war—the list goes on and on. Millions of other people were targeted and murdered. While they were not Jews, they endured struggle and suffering as well. Their place in the Holocaust remains unclear, however.

Many historians and organizations have their own definition for what constitutes a Holocaust victim. Since the end of World War II, the definition has taken on new meanings. Factors such as religion, race, and severity of one’s struggles all play an influencing role in determining the legitimacy of a Holocaust victim. Who gets to decide this? Who is to say one person's struggles are more valid than others? The Holocaust is such a huge event and it can be difficult to fathom what happened in its entirety. Bergen and many other historians have explained what is important in regards to the Holocaust in attempts to make it manageable. In the process though, they have established boundaries around the event. Investigating and analyzing these boundaries will help to establish a greater understanding of how these boundaries were created, and what information is left out as such. This does not imply these historians are evil or biased for drawing boundaries; it simply enables us to further understand the enormity of the Holocaust. Generally speaking, the United States has identified Holocaust victims as those who are Jewish. This makes sense, as Jews were a significant portion of those persecuted by the Nazis. But what about the other millions of victims who were targeted? These millions of others even include an American! Her story may help to uncover the explanation of how our understanding of these other victims helps to shape public memory of the Holocaust in America.

Betty Laurie

A New Englander, a countess, a prisoner, and a survivor. An unlikely combination, but all of these describe Roberta Laurie, or Betty as she was better known in her early life. Her story begins far from the shores of New England. She was born to a well-off family on September 24, 1891, in the coastal county of Berwick, Scotland. Her parents were Robert A. Laurie and Catherine (Miller) Laurie, both hailing from Scotland as well. Betty was not an only child, and in total the Lauries had seven children, Betty being the third oldest. Yet she was the only child to be born in Scotland. Before her birth, the Lauries had immigrated and settled in New England. While the family was on a trip to Scotland visiting family, Betty had been born. The rest of her siblings were born in and around the New England area.

Three years after her birth, in 1894, Betty had become a fully naturalized citizen of the United States. It was in New England where Betty would begin her life. The Lauries first lived in Rhode Island for a short time, but moved to Mansfield, Massachusetts, soon after. They remained there through her childhood, and Betty soon gained popularity at school. According to a local newspaper “She was an attractive young blonde with a vivacious and energetic

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manner.” In fact, it was at Mansfield High School where she adopted the nickname “Betty” before her graduation in 1909.

One of her most notable accomplishments in her adolescence was her career as a phone operator at the Mansfield Telephone Exchange. At the time, this position was no simple task. Long before the days of smartphones, these “Hello Girls” operated at a switchboard. When someone wanted to place a call, the operator would have to physically plug and unplug the jack into the switchboard. The job required the women to be quick, concentrated, and friendly when communicating with those over the phone. Betty had excelled in this role, as she possessed all of these qualities, but she also knew there was more to life than sitting behind a switchboard.

Betty’s artistic ability went back years, and she often dreamed of a life of designing. It was in her childhood that she had discovered her love for art and design. As she got older, she discovered an early outlet for this craft in dolls. This was also at a time when dolls were rising in popularity. Her talents paid off and took her down to New York where she was able to dedicate her time to the art of costume design, while also working in the Peck & Peck department store. She spent winters down in Miami, Florida, but remained in New York for five years working and

28 Rossiter Notes, Folder 5/5, box 3, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
32 Rossiter, Margaret L. “Women in the Resistance Papers 1974-1998 (inclusive) 1974-1985 (bulk).” Box 3, 1/5 folders relating to Mauduit (Laurie), Countess Roberta de. University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center). Hereafter referred to as WRP.
studying. Eventually, in 1926, her talents took her abroad to a school of design in Paris where she graduated with honors.\textsuperscript{33}

Her design degree was not Betty’s only success while in France; with a colleague she attended a dance of cadets at Saint Cyr Military Academy in Guer, France, and there she had caught the eye of a “rich French Count,” the Count Henri De Mauduit.\textsuperscript{34} He belonged to one of the old French aristocracies that had presided over vast estates for centuries and had untold wealth.\textsuperscript{35} Betty and the Count were married on January 19, 1928, and lived in the Château du Bourblanc in Plourivo, France. Not only had Betty won the heart of a French Count, she had assumed the role of Countess. Unlike most other American women who married into the French aristocracy at the time, Betty maintained her American citizenship. The estate, dating back to the fifteenth century, was quite intricate in design. A more notable feature, and one that assisted Betty well in the years down the road, was the large space between the ceiling and the floor of the attic.\textsuperscript{36} A perfect hiding spot.

The happiness the couple shared as they began their new life together was short lived. War had broken out on September 1, 1939, and the Nazis invaded France soon after; the country fell in June 1940. The thought of standing up to the Nazis did not seem to scare Betty. She wanted to help the Allies in their struggle, but her husband Henri pushed against it. His reasoning was the high volume of Germans idly waiting in the coastal defense zones, and urged her to tend to her flowers and vegetable garden instead. Soon after, in January 1941, Henri left to join General

\textsuperscript{33}“Ex-Phone Girl Wins Rich French Count,” 9.
\textsuperscript{34}Rossiter Notes, Box 3, Folder 1/5, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
\textsuperscript{36}Rossiter Notes, Folder 5/5, box 3, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
Charles de Gaulle’s Free French in England. With the departure of her husband, she was left with two choices: bide her time attending to her flowers and garden, or help the Allies take on the Nazis.

It seems only fitting that Betty would jump at the opportunity to join the fight, as she was a strong-willed individual. And with her husband away, who would stop her? However, as the late historian Margaret L. Rossiter found when researching the life of Betty Laurie, Betty did not immediately leap at the opportunity of joining the Resistance. She had followed her husband's wishes until 1943, when a young French intelligence agent came knocking on her door seeking shelter while he waited to cross the Channel to England. The agent remained hidden in her home for the next five weeks. Betty had merely breached the surface of her involvement with the resistance, and her time involved was far from over.

With the fall of France in 1940, the Allies had discovered the shortest way into Britain from France was across the Channel. Those willing to risk German patrols would be chartered across the rough seas. United States agent Val Williams and Canadian secret agent Raymond LaBrosse were sent into France via parachutes to set up this evacuation route. This mission was known as Oaktree. The Mauduit home, Le Château de Bourblanc, was located in the approximate area where these French Resistance agents were hiding in Plourivo, France. It was a strategic location for the resistance which led to her recruitment into the French Resistance. By

37 Rossiter Notes, Folder 5/5, box 3, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
40 Rossiter Notes, Box 3, Folder 1/5, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
June 1943, Betty had harbored 34 stranded aviators plus five more from a bomber that was shot down on a mission to Lorient.\textsuperscript{41}

It was in that same month that her luck ran out. The Germans got word that Betty was harboring Allied airmen and arrived at her chateau early in the morning to search for the resistance fighters. The Germans found nothing in their initial search and left. If Betty had fled, there is a strong chance she would have been able to avoid the pain and torture she would soon endure. But that meant others would most likely have been taken in her place, and that was not something she was willing to chance. Later in the day, the Germans came back for another search and their efforts were again fruitless. They never found the hidden airmen. She was nevertheless taken into custody and told she would be released after questioning. What Betty could only assume would take a few hours was actually the beginning of her two-year imprisonment.\textsuperscript{42}

Before being deported to a concentration camp, Betty spent some time being questioned in French prisons on her involvement with the French Resistance. Records from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museums Archives contain records of a French woman by an unknown name that had a similar background to Betty. She had joined the French Resistance August 5, 1941, never having believed she would be able to as a woman. She would often say “I thought that was not a woman’s job.”\textsuperscript{43} She enjoyed her work with the Resistance, but soon was arrested on January 21, 1944. Since this unnamed woman endured tortuous experiences in French prisons, it is quite possible that Betty may have also been subjected to beatings and torture as the Germans tried to extract information. While Betty was at Rennes prison in France,

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\textsuperscript{41} Rossiter, \textit{Women in the Resistance}, 215. \\
\textsuperscript{42} Rossiter, \textit{Women in the Resistance}, 216. \\
\textsuperscript{43} RG-02.038, “Montluc Ravensbrück: A Record of Imprisonment,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington D.C.
\end{flushright}
they had her on only bread and water for 35 days. Her response? “It’s O.K. with me, boys… I have been trying to get thin but I never had the courage to stick to a diet.” Even while subjected to this violence, the unnamed woman reported after liberation: “Thank God I always had the strength to hold my tongue.” In similar fashion, Betty reported after liberation “Don’t ever tell me women talk.” Both the women’s silence had been a bold act of defiance, but also their ticket to hell. Both Betty and the unnamed woman were subsequently transported to Ravensbrück.

Located 50 miles north of Berlin, Germany, on the southern edge of the Mecklenburg lake district, Ravensbrück concentration camp was the first SS camp to be specially constructed for women. Construction began in May 1939 and the camp was surrounded by high walls fortified with electric barbed wire and adequate rail and water connections. Heinrich Himmler, Hitler’s second in command and head of the SS (Nazism’s elite force), believed it to be “a good location for a concentration camp.” Aside from the strict separation of genders within the camp system overall, Ravensbrück was unlike any of the other SS camps. Himmler saw females as “less dangerous” and “more susceptible” to reform. This stemmed from gender stereotypes that led him to believe women to be the “weaker sex,” therefore requiring less severe treatment than their

45 RG-02.038, “Montluc Ravensbrück: A Record of Imprisonment,” United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington D.C.
49 Helm, Ravensbrück: Life and Death In Hitler’s Concentration Camp For Women, 19-20.
male counterparts. That did not mean, however, that violence was omitted from the camp entirely. It simply meant that physical violence was far less lethal and endemic.\footnote{Wachsmann, \textit{KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps}, 227.}

Arrival at Ravensbrück forced women into the brutal camp lifestyle. What Betty would have endured upon her arrival were screaming guards, dogs, and a ritual that forced women to abandon any hope of individuality and modesty. The women were forced to abandon all their possessions, undress, shower, and endure a bodily examination.\footnote{Wachsmann, \textit{KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps}, 229.} As a result of this examination, it was not uncommon for the camp guards to shave the women's heads.\footnote{Helm, \textit{Ravensbrück: Life and Death In Hitler's Concentration Camp For Women}, 24.} Arrival at Ravensbrück struck fear into many of the women. Genia Rotenberg, a Polish survivor of Ravensbrück and Bergen-Belsen, describes it as “We showered they shaved our heads and I was convinced this is the end.”\footnote{RG-02-173, Holocaust Memories of Genya Rotenberg, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington D.C.}

This was not the end, however. The next order of business at Ravensbrück was to distribute prison uniforms, tattoo the women, and give the women an identifying badge. The SS had created a system of marking in the concentration camp systems. The color-coded badges identified the reason the prisoner was there, and was to be sewn onto their uniform. Betty was a prisoner of war/ political prisoner which meant she would have worn an upside down red triangle on her sleeve.\footnote{Wall Photoreproduction, “Markings for Prisoners in Concentration Camps,” The Holocaust Exhibit, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Courtesy of Dokumentationsarchiv des Österreichischen Widerstands.} The women of the camp were also subjected to brutal conditions in their daily life. This would have consisted of daily roll calls and formations along with backbreaking labor for hours on end.
Betty was sent to work in a munitions factory near Leipzig for ten months during her time in captivity.\textsuperscript{56} Even years after the fact, Betty still bore the marks of the beatings that were inflicted upon her while she was a slave laborer.\textsuperscript{57} At the factory she was forced to work long, twelve-hour days loading artillery shells.\textsuperscript{58} The German concentration camp system (in contrast to the death camps) were built on the premise of slave labor, constructing material for Germany’s war effort. Betty had endured so much in the 22 months she had been held captive. In addition to the back breaking labor and torture, she spent her days and nights in fear, as it was common knowledge arms factories were prime targets for Allied bombers.\textsuperscript{59}

Liberation day, however, was right around the corner. The news of the Allied victories had made their way down the grapevine. On April 20, 1945, Betty Laurie was liberated by the 69th Infantry Division of the U.S. First Army. The first person to interact with Betty upon liberation was Private Eddie Miller of New York City, and he gave her a dollar bill as a souvenir. Reporter Hal Boyle of the \textit{Boston Globe} had the opportunity to interview Betty after her liberation. Even in the face of everything she endured, her spark never went out. He noted how her eyes had dimmed and her hair had prematurely turned gray, yet she still remained “undaunted and animated” as she told her story.\textsuperscript{60}

Betty continued to live a long and fulfilling life after liberation. She reunited with her husband Henri at their apartment in Paris after nearly four years of separation. They then returned to life at their Chateau in France once again; Betty returning to a life of being a

\textsuperscript{56} Rossiter Notes, Folder 5/5, box 3, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
\textsuperscript{57}Rossiter Notes, Box 3, Folder 1/5, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
\textsuperscript{58} Rossiter Notes, Folder 5/5, box 3, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center).
\textsuperscript{59} Rossiter, \textit{Women in the Resistance}, 216.
\textsuperscript{60} “Stoughton Countess Tells of Prison Camp Escape,” 3.
socialite, while Henri worked in the Colonial Office holding various posts in Africa from 1945 to 1952. Her later life was not quite as eventful in comparison with her youth. She toured around America, visiting family and sharing her story. Betty had even been awarded the Medal of Freedom with bronze palm by the American government.\(^6\) (The date is unknown, but can be assumed it was shortly after her liberation.) Years later, when Henri and Betty resumed somewhat of a normal life, their epic love story came to a close. The reason and date are unknown, but the couple divorced when they were both in their mid-60’s.\(^6\) Not long after, on August 1, 1975, Betty Laurie passed away and was laid to rest in a graveyard near her chateau alongside the Count Henri de Mauduit, who had died a year prior in December 1974.

The legacy Betty Laurie left behind was one that inspired courage and bravery in the absence of hope. She proved this countless times during her time in captivity. Her experience of being taken prisoner by the Nazis and sent to the Ravensbrück concentration camp is in many ways similar to that of other Holocaust victims. Yet, she is not considered to be a part of the Holocaust. So where does Betty fit into the story? She was not a part of the Holocaust, but she was at the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She was not Jewish, but she was tortured and subjected to similar, if not the same conditions. If that is true, why has she been left out? The answer to that question may seem obvious, but it is not.

Betty’s story sends another powerful message in addition to bravery and courage. Her story shows that this genocide extended beyond those who were Jewish. It shows how complex

\(^6\) Rossiter Notes, Folder 5/5, box 3, WRP, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Research Center). Betty’s name was not located on the official list posted by the U.S. government for award winners at this time. This information has been based off of the research collected by historian Margaret Rossiter.

this situation really is, and how much more there is to learn. Betty Laurie herself reveals a boundary around American remembrance of the Holocaust. She transcends the boundaries of our remembrance rather than obeying them. Americans were not as removed as many are led to believe—Betty Laurie is proof of that. As an American woman fighting for the French Resistance, she was subjected to Nazi brutality just as those who were Jewish would have been. At this time, the meaning behind the word ‘Holocaust’ was the genocide of the European Jews. So no, Betty Laurie was not a part of the Holocaust. But her story being overshadowed by more popular stories and accounts of the time poses a serious question. Betty Laurie was not a part of the Holocaust. So what is the Holocaust in U.S. memory?

**American Remembrance**

The Holocaust is a historical event that is deeply embedded in American culture. Why is that? Americans had limited involvement in the events of the Holocaust, yet took on a major role in the remembrance and legacy. According to the Massachusetts state standards for teaching, kids do not officially start learning about genocide (this includes the Holocaust) until they reach High School. Unofficially, however, students are introduced to the Holocaust in grades six and seven when learning about World War II. U.S. society has a very clear understanding of what fits into the definition of the Holocaust. They are well informed of the millions of Jews and others who died at the hands of the Nazis, and are aware of the purpose of both the concentration and death camps. There is also a very clear memory and awareness of how the Second World

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63 Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (2018), History and Social Sciences Framework, Published by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 18.
War plays into it and how young American men heroically fought and died for ideals such as freedom and democracy. These memories, this awareness, are what shapes public memory of the Holocaust in America.

What of those who did not fit that criteria? Take Betty Laurie for example, an American citizen, French-Resistance fighter, and overall strong-willed and determined woman. Even through all her struggles and all her accomplishments, she does not fit the criteria. Betty does not fit into the U.S. memory about the Holocaust, or about World War II either. She was not Jewish, she was not a soldier, and she did not die at Ravensbrück. Where do Betty and people like her fit into public memory and understanding? The short answer is she does not. But public memory is not set in stone—it can be expanded, meaning there is plenty of room for Betty to be remembered. Instead of obeying boundaries, she transcends them. While she does not technically fit into what society considers to be the Holocaust or World War II, she deserves a place in public memory.

Today, public memory and the overall legacy of the Holocaust is reflected in many memorials and museums all throughout the country. The United States has taken on a large role in the remembrance of the Holocaust, even though the country’s involvement was limited at the time. Certain boundaries have been placed on the details and information within these memorials and museums which alter the overall understanding of the event. The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum located in Washington, D.C., the World War II Memorial located in Washington, D.C., and the FDR Memorial also located in Washington, D.C., and the New England Holocaust Memorial located in Boston, Massachusetts, are no exception. These memorials, designed by human beings, help dictate the legacy and meaning of the Holocaust.
The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), located in the heart of Washington, D.C., is adjacent to the National Mall. From the outside, the building is quite bland. On the inside it is quite industrial and dark. Quotations along the outside of the building ask “Why did the Holocaust happen?” “Why did the world look the other way?” One in particular captures the attention of visitors upon entering: “Think about what you saw.” The museum not only aims to educate people, but also encourages them to reflect on what they witness and learn in order to better understand the Holocaust.

The permanent exhibit of the museum is “The Holocaust.” Visitors are brought up in an elevator to the start of the exhibit and follow the layout. The information and artifacts presented in this exhibit follow the timeline of events from the time period beginning with the years leading up to World War II, through the war years, and life after the war. Information is presented through the use of artifacts, pictures, audio and visuals, as well as informational text on the walls. The use of glass in this exhibit is quite extraordinary as well. Not only is it there as a protective barrier between visitors and artifacts, it is used as part of the displays. Some of the most thought provoking and one might say emotional artifacts are the ones visitors are able to interact with. An example of this is the cattle car visitors are able to walk through. Words cannot describe the emotions and thoughts one is confronted with when standing in the middle of the cattle car. The darkness and the cramped space make it overwhelming to imagine what these people were forced to endure.

The next exhibit that visitors are able to experience is “Americans and the Holocaust.” This exhibit shows how American policy, xenophobia, and antisemitism shaped public response to Nazism and the Holocaust. Through the use of media coverage such as newspapers, propaganda

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64 The following section about the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum is based on a visit to Washington, D.C. in July 2022 as part of the Bridgewater State University Adrian Tinsley Grant Program.
posters, films, government reports, and celebrity accounts, this exhibit reveals what information the American people had access to, and why they took the actions they took. This exhibit also offers a controversial idea that U.S. guilt has influenced U.S. remembrance of the Holocaust. According to this interpretation, this guilt grew after the fact and over time as more information was uncovered. If the United States did not do much during the time of the Holocaust, perhaps pushing to honor its legacy now could atone for that failure.

Having passed through each of the exhibits, visitors are then led to the “Hall of Remembrance” Holocaust Memorial. There is nothing flashy about this room—in fact it is quite bare. All around the surrounding walls, the names of the death and work camps are inscribed. On the opposite end of the entrance stands a memorial containing dirt from the concentration camps. On top lies a flame and a singular rose, a gesture of remembrance. The main purpose of this room is not to bombard people with graphic images and statistics, but rather reflect and remember. A wall just outside the hall has a famous quote from Holocaust survivor and historian Elie Wiesel: “For the dead and the living we must bear witness.” This tells us that not only are we responsible for the memories of those who died, we are responsible for what we do with those memories as well.

One of the ways in which the country chooses to honor the legacy of the Holocaust and World War II is not just through museums and education, but rather memorials as well. Also located along the National Mall in Washington, D.C., stands the World War II memorial. Through the stone architecture and bronze statues, this memorial recognizes the ways Americans served, commemorates those who fell in service of the United States, and recognizes the victory that was achieved during World War II. The memorial is divided into two main sections: the Atlantic and the Pacific theaters. This memorial, while not surprising, is quite nationalistic, as
evident from the American flags, the commemorative Wall of Freedom, down to the location of the memorial in the nation’s capital. It is located just between the Washington and Lincoln memorial. There are two key details in this memorial worth noting at this time. One would be the commemorative mention of women and the role they played in the war effort. Unsurprisingly, however, this commemoration was only two quotes on one of the memorial walls. The next detail of note would be the lack of mention of the Holocaust. The two events were so intertwined; one could not exist without the other. Yet, there is no mention of the horrid atrocities at this monumental site. In the United States, public memory of World War II is positive and is not able to abide the tragedy of the Holocaust. The public remembers Americans who participated and served in World War II, but not the Holocaust, according to this view. So Betty Laurie, an American woman, could not be considered part of the Holocaust. But there is also no place for her in World War II memory either.

Only a short walk away stands the FDR memorial in Washington, D.C., and it is quite similar to the latter as well. As visitors walk through the memorial, they are taken through the key accomplishments of Roosevelt's life. Significant quotes and phrases relating to himself are etched throughout the memorial, arguably one of the more famous being “The arsenal of democracy.” Similar to the World War II memorial, there are elements of American nationalism and patriotism. The sculptures that are present exemplify this greatly. Also similar to the World War II memorial, there is also no mention of the Holocaust. As mentioned prior, Roosevelt had done the most in service of the European Jewry during and after the Nazi’s reign of terror. Yet, there is nothing to commemorate FDR’s accomplishments in this vein. U.S. public memory compartmentalizes the Holocaust, World War II, and even FDR as well. By these standards, the Holocaust is not a part of American memory of FDR or WWII. At the same time however, the
location of these sites are to be considered as well. All three stand either on or adjacent to the National Mall in the nation's capital, therefore stating that the Holocaust is in fact a part of U.S. memory. Looking at the FDR Memorial and the World War II Memorial, there is not even mention of the Holocaust at all. Even with the War being so closely intertwined with the Holocaust, and FDR playing a key role, there is nothing. Only talks of peace and freedom for all.

U.S. memory is not limited to just national memorialization, however; museums and memorials are also located regionally throughout the country. Located along the Freedom Trail in Boston, Massachusetts, stands the New England Holocaust Memorial (NEHM). The memorial is designed to be walked through as visitors take in the information. There are six glass towers known as the “Towers of Hope.” On each of the towers, the numbers of the victims from six of the main death camps are inscribed on the glass (Chelmno, Treblinka, Majdanek, Sobibor, Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Belzec). From the bottom of each tower, smoke rises, prompting reflection on what the victims suffered through as they endured the gas chambers. The memorial itself is out in the open, and the towers light up at night. There are benches surrounding it along with informational plaques. Displayed largely and proudly at one of the ends of the memorial is the word Shoah.65

Both the USHMM and the NEHM do a wonderful job in memorializing the legacy of the Holocaust. But at the end of the day, what boundaries around the Holocaust do these memorials draw? There are many boundaries within all these examples that are present; consider just the two of inclusion and horror. Both the USHMM and the NEHM recognize the persecution and victimization of the six million Jews and the millions of others. “The Holocaust” permanent exhibit highlights the atrocities committed against the Armenians in addition to the plight of the

65 The word ‘Shoah’ is Hebrew. The literal translation of the word means catastrophe, however it refers to the genocide that is the Holocaust.
Jews. And while there is no mention of Armenians at the NEHM, this memorial mentions Catholic targets in the *First They Came*... poem attributed to Pastor Martin Niemöller. The NEHM also gives a brief timeline of events, indicating when everything happened, but there are no graphic images or anything along those lines. This is in contrast to the USHMM, which does not shy away from showing images of the death and destruction inflicted by the Nazis, such as piles of dead bodies, mass murder, naked men, women, and children just to name a few. The museum does demonstrate some caution, however, as younger audiences are able to access the exhibits. Toward the end of “The Holocaust” exhibit, there are three video segments of the Allies liberating the camps playing on a continuous loop. The videos of liberation shown are not censored, but various warnings posted on the wall surrounding the screens explain that the footage and images are extremely raw. Even with the contrasting levels of graphic imagery at the USHMM and the NEHM, both demonstrate similarly an awareness that certain imagery of the Holocaust might be disturbing.

So why are some images and information permitted, while other information is not? These are huge boundaries within Holocaust studies, especially the boundaries of inclusion and horror. Most of the time, images and details are too intense for most people to comprehend. That is why the exhibits at the USHMM have warnings of graphic imagery and details. Yet, one could argue that in order to fully understand the severity of what happened, people should be faced with the raw and uncensored information. In Germany, for example, people are able to see the camps frozen in time as they would have been all those years ago. Here in America, there are no Nazi concentration camps or historic sites. Much of the information shown and taught has been

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66 Text Display, *First They Came*... Poem (1946), Martin Niemöller, The New England Holocaust Memorial, Boston, MA.
reviewed in order to tell a certain story. We remember through the filter of what and how others want us to remember.

But what should we remember? Memorials and museums across the country frame the Holocaust in a clear cut way. They emphasize the six million Jews and others who perished, the young American soldiers fighting for freedom and democracy, and the list goes on. It is this thinking however, that enables the United States to ultimately forget about people like Betty. While her experience may not be the same as someone who was Jewish, it does not mean her struggles are insignificant. She had similar experiences to Holocaust victims, she was associated with the war through the French Resistance, as well as her American nationality. Her experience touches on World War II and the Holocaust, and as an American citizen, she is especially salient as a connection between the United States and these events. The boundaries of the Holocaust are not clear cut—the definition of the event can vary in many ways: 6 million or 12 million victims, full of gore or sanitized for public viewing. The closer one examines it, one can see it is not so “clear.” By expanding the boundaries on public memory in the United States, more people, and Betty Laurie in particular, can be included in the U.S. memory of the Holocaust. It is difficult to fathom the Holocaust it all its complexity. But knowing the story of Betty Laurie, a woman who was more a citizen of the world, more than just American, more than just French, and who endured Ravensbrück, would bring our memory at least a little closer to appreciating the tragedy and its universal nature.

Conclusion
The people of the United States generally remember the Holocaust in the present day as a clear and concise event that happened in human history. But the Holocaust was neither clear nor concise. Museums and memorials across the country have placed emphasis on the plight of the European Jews and the evils of Nazism, leaving little room for people such as Betty Laurie. Overall understanding of the Holocaust, and arguably World War II as well, has been dictated by what information is presented in these memorials and museums as well. Sometimes this is done so as not to upset people, such as when pictures have been blurred out; sometimes this is even a political decision, as seen in the *First They Came*... poem attributed to Pastor Martin Niemöller in 1946. As displayed at the USHMM, the poem acknowledges the plight of Socialists, Trade Unionists, Jews, and then the narrator. 67 By ignoring the plight of these threatened groups, the narrator has ultimately sealed his own fate since “there was no one left to speak for me.” The version of the poem written displayed the NEHM, however, mentions Catholics as one of the persecuted groups in Nazi Germany. 68 The creators of this memorial had in mind the large Catholic population in New England when constructing this memorial. The *First They Came*... poem is a famous literary piece associated with Holocaust remembrance. By including Catholics, there is a larger appeal to the Catholic population, which results in more visitors to the NEHM. These museums and memorials show how the memorialization fits into both national and regional memory across the country. The United States has chosen to remember the Holocaust in such a specific way that it has created different public memories and understandings of this event.

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67 Wall Text Display, *First They Came*... Poem (1946), Martin Niemöller, The Holocaust Exhibit, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Washington, D.C.
68 Text Display, *First They Came*... Poem (1946), Martin Niemöller, The New England Holocaust Memorial, Boston, MA.
So, while she may not be considered a victim of the Holocaust, Betty Laurie has a place in the public memory of the Holocaust and World War II. Reconsidering Bergen’s four points for understanding the Holocaust, Betty comfortably fits three out of the four criteria. Point one discusses how the Holocaust was a global event; a transnational event. Betty Laurie transcended national boundaries. Upon being taken by the Nazis, she was a French Countess who had retained her American citizenship. She is a clear example of how the Holocaust was not limited to just that of a few European countries—it was a transnational event. In point three Bergen explains that the Holocaust has to be understood in the context of conflict. World War II and the Holocaust are deeply connected events; one cannot exist without the other. Betty Laurie was a victim of the Ravensbrück concentration camp and survived many of the Nazi horrors that of a Holocaust victim would have endured. But let’s consider why she ended up there in the first place: she was aiding in a secret mission for the French Resistance in Nazi occupied France. She was just as much a part of the war as she was the events of the Holocaust. Finally, Bergen’s fourth point reflects on the other groups targeted aside from just the Jews. Betty clearly fits into this point as well, as she was not Jewish. The Nazis took her as a prisoner of war; her uniform at the concentration camp displayed a red triangle to signify this, rather than the well-known star of David. Specifically this last point of Bergen’s raises the question in regard to the other non-Jews who fell victim of the Nazi plight; their place in the Holocaust still remains unclear in public memory.

As exemplified above, Betty Laurie clearly fits into public memory, so why not remember her? Why construct a constricted narrative of the Holocaust? Considering first what it means to be a victim of the Holocaust, no, Betty Laurie is not that. Even with her shared experiences, by definition she is not a victim of the Holocaust. Many countries, historians, and
institutions have their own definitions of what constitutes a Holocaust victim, however the Yad Vashem World Holocaust Remembrance Center in Israel puts it best; “At Yad Vashem, we define Shoah survivors as Jews who lived for any amount of time under Nazi domination, direct or indirect, and survived.” This definition refers to those survivors that are Jewish, but also points out that no historical definition of a Holocaust victim can be completely satisfactory.

Considering public memory in the United States, where Betty Laurie fits, and what constitutes a victim of the Holocaust, I argue for a new definition of how the Holocaust needs to be remembered in public memory. The boundaries placed on museums and memorials in the United States drastically alter our understanding of the Holocaust overall. And because of how public memory is structured, people like Betty Laurie are not able to be included. The Holocaust was an international event that affected the lives of more than just those who were Jewish, and needs to be remembered as such. Americans deserve to know that Betty Laurie played a role in fighting and being punished by the Nazis. The United States does not have a lot of examples of people like that who are not soldiers, which is why Betty Laurie deserves a place in public memory.

As the years roll on, the Holocaust moves farther and farther back within human history. We are at a point where many of those who survived are no longer with us or will soon be gone. This makes Holocaust studies all the more crucial. The more time that passes, less survivors are able to speak out. Once they pass, it might be easier in some ways to debate the definition of a survivor. But if the U.S. memory of the Holocaust remains subject to rigid boundaries, who is to say a similar oversimplification would not endure? Stories such as Betty’s may seem like just another survivor's tale in a vast sea, but it really is not. The Holocaust is a complex event, and people like Betty further enriches our understanding of the event. Betty Laurie has a place in

public memory. She reflects the flaws in the long crafted system of remembrance, and that we must be aware of the boundaries created around public memory—even if those boundaries exist for good reasons. Remembering what happened is only half of the job. It is how we use those memories going forward that will shape the legacy of the Holocaust. And if we are unable to remember the narrative in its entirety, then we have failed. For public memory is not just remembering the events in its entirety, it is how we remember them as we move forward.
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