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Hidden Genocides

Power, Knowledge, Memory

EDITED BY

ALEXANDER LABAN HINTON, THOMAS LA POINTE,
AND DOUGLAS IRVIN-ERICKSON



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CONTENTS

<i>List of Illustrations</i>	vii
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	ix

Introduction: Hidden Genocides: Power, Knowledge, Memory	1
DOUGLAS IRVIN-ERICKSON, THOMAS LA POINTE, AND ALEXANDER LABAN HINTON	

PART ONE

Genocide and Ways of Knowing

1. Does the Holocaust Reveal or Conceal Other Genocides?: The Canadian Museum for Human Rights and Grievable Suffering	21
A. DIRK MOSES	
2. Hidden in Plain Sight: Atrocity Concealment in German Political Culture before the First World War	52
ELISA VON JOEDEN-FORGEY	
3. Beyond the Binary Model: National Security Doctrine in Argentina as a Way of Rethinking Genocide as a Social Practice	68
DANIEL FEIERSTEIN	

PART TWO

Power, Resistance, and Edges of the State

- | | | |
|----|--|-----|
| 4. | "Simply Bred Out": Genocide and the Ethical in the Stolen Generations
DONNA-LEE FRIEZE | 83 |
| 5. | Historical Amnesia: The "Hidden Genocide" and Destruction of the Indigenous Peoples of the United States
CHRIS MATO NUNPA | 96 |
| 6. | Circassia: A Small Nation Lost to the Great Game
WALTER RICHMOND | 109 |

PART THREE

Forgetting, Remembering, and Hidden Genocides

- | | | |
|-----|---|-----|
| 7. | The Great Lakes Genocides: Hidden Histories, Hidden Precedents
ADAM JONES | 129 |
| 8. | Genocide and the Politics of Memory in Cambodia
ALEXANDER LABAN HINTON | 149 |
| 9. | Constructing the "Armenian Genocide": How Scholars Unremembered the Assyrian and Greek Genocides in the Ottoman Empire
HANNIBAL TRAVIS | 170 |
| 10. | "The Law Is Such as It Is": Reparations, "Historical Reality," and the Legal Order in the Czech Republic
KRISTA HEGBURG | 193 |
| | <i>Contributors</i> | 209 |
| | <i>Index</i> | 213 |

ILLUSTRATIONS

- | | | |
|------|---|-----|
| I.I. | The Genocide Studies Canon | 6 |
| 7.1 | Map of Africa's Great Lakes Region | 130 |
| 8.1 | Photograph of Executed Prisoner and Cell, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum | 158 |
| 8.2 | Barbed-Wire Exterior of Building C, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum | 158 |
| 8.3 | Map of Skulls, Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum | 160 |
| 9.1 | Map of Eastern Anatolia and and the Ottoman/Russian the Ottoman/Persian Frontiers, circa 1914 | 173 |
| 9.2 | Map of the Hakkari Region and the Ottoman/Persian Border Area | 174 |

Does the Holocaust Reveal or Conceal Other Genocides?

The Canadian Museum for Human Rights
and Grievable Suffering

A. DIRK MOSES

Whether public memory of the Holocaust reveals or conceals other genocides is a common—and controversial—question. Many take it as given that widespread shock about the Holocaust caused the “human rights revolution,” crowned by the U.N. Universal Declaration on Human Rights and the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide in 1948. By increasing sensitivity about gross violations generally, the Holocaust is said to inspire interest in and research on other genocides. After all, was not the genocide concept itself, coined by the Polish-Jewish lawyer Raphael Lemkin in 1943, modeled on the wartime persecutions, deportations, and mass murder of Jews? The Holocaust’s institutionalization in official memorial days by the United Nations, Great Britain, and other countries is held to show that it has become the bedrock of a new, global, cosmopolitan ethic that is newly sensitive to others’ suffering. In these ways, it is claimed, the Holocaust reveals other genocides.²

Skeptics are not so sure. A close reading of the U.N. debates in the second half of the 1940s shows that its human rights regime cannot be deduced from Holocaust consciousness because no such consciousness then existed. Contemporaries referred broadly to civilian victims of the Nazis rather than only to Jewish ones; Nazi criminality in general rather than the Holocaust in particular was a background context of the U.N. human rights regime.³ What is more, the Holocaust’s later iconic status purveys a false universalism that obscures alternative forms of traumatic violence, let alone other genocides: only that which resembles the Holocaust is a legible transgression—which accounts for the seemingly ubiquitous effort of so many victim groups to affix the term “holocaust” to their suffering.⁴ Far from constituting a symbolic idiom that empowers

non-Jewish victims to win public recognition, the Holocaust occludes their experiences by establishing an unattainable monumental threshold. In these ways, it is claimed, the Holocaust conceals other genocides.

This debate has come to a head in the controversy about the new Canadian Museum for Human Rights (CMHR) in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The bitter, public wrangle about its projected core Holocaust gallery is a textbook case study of hidden genocides at the intersection of power, knowledge, and memory. Enshrining the Nazi genocide of Jews as the unique lens, template, yardstick, paradigm, or prototype—these are the terms of the discussion—with or through which to understand all genocides and human rights violations satisfies Jewish communal leaders who fear that the Holocaust will be hidden when not specially highlighted, as I explain below. By contrast, leaders of some other migrant groups assert that their powerlessness means the genocides and human rights abuses endured by their compatriots have been hidden from memory and research agendas—and often still are—and are therefore inadequately represented in the museum. Arguing, as many do, that the Holocaust is the “best documented” genocide and therefore best suited for the pedagogical purpose of exemplifying human rights violations misses the point, according to these critics. They think that injustice led to the lack of documentation about other genocides in the past and that the CMHR is compounding it by reproducing historic power imbalances in the exhibition’s Holocaust-centric design.

We are left with a standoff in which Jewish communal leaders and their academic supporters maintain that foregrounding the Holocaust “in no way” diminishes other genocides, while the communal leaders who exert proprietary memory rights over those other genocides vehemently dispute this assertion. Indeed, they suggest that dedicating a gallery to the Holocaust while the five genocides recognized by the Canadian state—Armenia, the Holodomor (the Soviet famine genocide against Ukraine in 1932–1933), the Holocaust, Srebrenica (in Bosnia), and Rwanda—are showcased together in the smaller “breaking the silence gallery,” evinces prejudice and racism because it prioritizes the one over the many, thereby violating Canada’s multicultural consensus about equal treatment of migrant communities.⁵ Moreover, how fair is the Holocaust’s representation in two galleries, complain communal leaders? As might be expected, they in turn are accused of anti-Semitism.⁶

In a Darwinist zero-sum game, the highlighting of the one group’s genocide is experienced as obscuring another’s. Moreover, the other’s memory also represents a threatening reversion to the dark days of the interwar, war, and immediate postwar years before public recognition of one’s genocide. The other’s memory even stands as an unbearable reminder of one’s former subordinate social status in the country of origin, rekindling traumatic memories of the vulnerability and violence that led to emigration. This constellation inevitably

pressures Canada’s multicultural tapestry of Indigenous and migrant communities, which ostensibly support the official policy of equity, inclusivity, and social cohesion.

It is noteworthy that these memory wars were unleashed by the imperative for *government* recognition of victim status. After all, communally founded and sponsored museums and memorials to past suffering dot the Canadian urban and rural landscape; there is no shortage of memory about traumas that occurred locally and abroad. The campaigns to have them officially validated seems driven by a fear that if *their* memory is officially recognized, then *ours* is hidden—again. In trying to understand these fraught interactions, Judith Butler’s notions of grievability, precariousness, and precarity lay bare the grand psychodrama driving the debate. Ideologically loaded public frames screen out certain forms of human suffering and loss while others “become nationally recognized and amplified”: they are grievable, eligible for mourning’s affective investment. The Canadian memory competitions concern the “differential allocation of grievability.”⁷ The competition is driven by an acute sense of precariousness, which connotes not only vulnerability but the fact that one’s own existence is ultimately socially dependent, that is, in the hands of others.⁸ Far from this realization leading one group to empathize with another group’s suffering and to concomitant solidarity, as Butler hopes, the evidence suggests the opposite conclusion, namely that consciousness of precariousness and memories of what she calls precarity—exposure to violence from an arbitrary state or inadequate support networks—lead to frantic efforts to win grievable status, because such status might ensure public safety. Fear of precarity drives the Canadian dispute because contemporary events are interpreted as potential repetitions of past traumas, the “terror of history.”⁹ Thus Jewish Canadian leaders insist on the centrality of Holocaust memory because they think anti-Semitism is on the rise, yet again, and that Israel is, as always, under siege, while Ukrainian Canadian leaders worry about pernicious Russian influence in sabotaging newly won Ukrainian independence. It is a struggle for permanent security.

Not all migrant community leaders feel this way. Some, like the Chinese Canadian community, do not oppose the CHMR configuration so long as its stories are included. Indeed, its leaders do not feel the need to press for a victim framing of their experiences.¹⁰ The Armenian leadership seems mollified after initial concern, although Armenian Canadian scholars at the Zoryan Institute remain unconvinced.¹¹ The competitive intersections of specific memories in relation to grievability and precarity need to be carefully identified and explained, for Holocaust memory is plainly experienced in different ways by different community leaders, helping reveal their suffering in some cases while concealing it in others; or so they claim. A related question posed by the participants is whether the Holocaust’s intensifying public commemoration is based

on its inherent differences from other genocides or is the result of more successful advocacy, or both. Was the Holocaust *discovered* after decades in obscurity or *made* by an upwardly mobile Jewish community?

The power/knowledge/memory nexus and clash of perspectives about the function of Holocaust memory that I analyze below suggests the impossibility of appealing to a supposedly authoritative body of facts as a neutral source of adjudication. The players' partisan rhetorical strategies also render suspect the universal claims they make. But if an epistemological vantage point for assessing rival frameworks is therefore unavailable, an ethically preferable subject position may be entertained, namely that of some Indigenous Canadian leaders and writers. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis, after all, were the initial object of discourses about humanity in Canada—the notorious trichotomy of savagery, barbarism, and civilization—in whose name they were conquered, dispossessed, massacred, and subject to governmentalities, like residential schools and forced adoptions, designed to culturally destroy them, which had devastating physical and psychological effects.¹²

As I suggest below, it is with Indigenous Canadians that Butler's ideal of empathy and solidarity in recognized precariousness is discernible. For in the manner of a critical theory of genocide studies, their experiences call into question the self-congratulatory human rights project itself, because their suffering at the hands of European settler colonialism implicates the category of humanity and the savagery/barbarism/civilization trichotomy that continues to animate Western political culture.¹³ It was with the aim of elevating Aboriginal children into the full humanity of white civilization that they were taken from their families and placed into residential schools—a policy that persisted into the 1980s. Holocaust memory does not fundamentally challenge this order because, from the outset, the Holocaust was coded as the consequence of Nazi barbarism.¹⁴ Indeed, human rights supplanted the Eurocentric language of civilization after World War II while performing the same function of distinguishing between the human and the not-quite or -yet human.¹⁵ And before the residential schools lies the Europeans' foundational violence to gain possession of this portion of the continent, violence that was also justified in civilization's name. The human rights project narrates the past teleologically to culminate in the omniscient and morally smug humanitarian subject, but it can only extricate itself from this foundational violence and subsequent policies to "civilize the natives" by a willful blindness to powerful discursive continuities. The limits of the humanitarian subject's reflexivity are its implications in the genocidal moments it has perpetrated against Indigenous people.

In view of the intuition that Indigenous experiences ought to be central in any *Canadian* museum dedicated to human rights, it is remarkable (though unsurprising) that Indigenous voices were entirely absent in the debates leading

up to the CMHR and that the museum integrates their stories of abuse into a progressive, national, human rights narrative. The grievability of Indigenous victims is a relatively recent development, and the attempt to eliminate their cultures is plainly a question that is difficult for a state-run museum to countenance. To be sure, the Canadian government apologized for the residential school catastrophe in 2008, but not for its own existence.¹⁶ The sovereignty that enabled these polices, far from being questioned, was strengthened by arrogating to itself the ability to selectively condemn the past and incorporate Indigenous people into a redeemed national project. As a proclaimed "human rights leader," it is impossible for the state to admit a genocidal foundation. This is a genocide whose name dare not be spoken in the museum; it is a "conceptual blockage" and will remain concealed, impervious to the progressive narrative of Holocaust consciousness that participates in rather than challenges the enduring savagery/barbarism/civilization categories.¹⁷ Instead of providing a narrative account of the CMHR controversy, this chapter analyzes the background anxieties about "hidden genocides" in the Canadian debate in order to understand its hidden motor.¹⁸

Entangled Grievability before the CMHR

Long before the dispute's apex in 2010 and 2011, the grievability dispute had been under way in competition between Jews and Ukrainians for public recognition of their suffering in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s. Fatally, their competition is sharpened by the entwinement of these cases, compounding the field's zero-sum logic. For, as we will see, Jewish communal leaders condemn as Holocaust co-perpetrators those Ukrainian nationalists whom many Ukrainians hail as heroic resisters to Polish, German, and Soviet imperial domination, while at least some Ukrainians have accused Jews of collaborating with the Soviet regime in attempting to destroy Ukraine in the 1930s.

The accumulation of grievances stretches back to the First World War, when Canadian authorities interned ethnic Ukrainians—migrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire—as "enemy aliens" until 1920. Of the approximately 8,500 interned men, 109 died and the others were exploited as virtual slave labor. Some 80,000 others had to register with the police as suspected security risks.¹⁹ The injustice, suffering, and humiliation have been a sore point ever since.²⁰ Jewish refugees in the 1930s, for their part, were denied entry to Canada—then with the world's most restrictive immigration policies—and could point to prevalent anti-Semitism as one of the reasons. The entwinement of suffering intensified at this moment. For at the same time, Ukrainian Canadian activists for a non-Soviet, independent Ukraine, who were mostly veterans of the war against Poland between 1918 and 1921, complained that recognition of the

Soviet's famine crime of 1932–1933 and Polish repression of its large Ukrainian minority was overshadowed by the Nazi persecution of German Jews. They were incensed by the League of Nations' support of the Polish claim to Western Ukraine and wanted to revise those boundaries. As revisionists, they were open to Nazi anti-Bolshevism and its anti-Polish and anti-Western stance to the extent that it furthered their national liberation project. Some of them shared the Nazis' paranoid views about "Judeo-Bolshevism," a prejudice of a piece with the conviction that Ukrainian Jews were somehow responsible for the loss of the war with Poland. Although the veteran-nationalists represented only a tiny minority of Ukrainian Canadians, the community was largely indifferent to contemporary Jewish suffering in Europe even if it did not share the nationalists' pro-Nazi views.

Herewith began the calculus whose logic dictated that grief for "them" came at "our" expense, particularly when our tolerated or hidden suffering demonstrated that we were profoundly ungrivable. One could not narrate the 1930s in a cogent manner that allowed both groups to be victims. The messiness of history did not lend itself to the morality tale that both needed to make sense of their suffering and to project it publicly. Thus a Ukrainian Canadian newspaper editor declared in 1933 that "the world press writes a great deal about Hitler's 'terror' against the Jews in Germany, although compared to the Soviet terror against Ukrainian people it is like a tiny drop of water in the sea."²¹ That was a fair comment in 1933 and even after the Kristallnacht pogrom in 1938 in view of the various forms of violence that Ukrainian civilians had endured from the Polish and Soviet states. The subsequent genocide of European Jews challenged this posited hierarchy of suffering; the task would become to share equal billing.

Nowhere was this challenge more evident than in the shared space of displaced persons (DP) camps in postwar occupied Germany, inhabited by surviving Jews and non-Jewish nationals of the many countries that the Nazis had conquered and from which they had imported slave laborers. In view of their terrible experiences, Jews tended to regard their fellow inmates as co-perpetrators of the Holocaust rather than as fellow victims of the Germans, so much so that many insisted on separate Jewish representation and treatment rather than inclusion as members of the formerly occupied European countries. Here was a key moment in the Zionist ethnogenesis that has animated Jewish communities ever since, whether in Israel or abroad: the thesis of collective world guilt for the Holocaust, the uniqueness of Jewish suffering, and insistence of separate political representation. Solidarity and common projects between Jews and non-Jews proved accordingly difficult, if not impossible, as Anna Holian describes.

There were also painful efforts at dialogue between Jewish and non-Jewish DPs. In Munich, for example, a group of Lithuanian DPs met with Lithuanian Jewish survivor and DP leader Yosef Leibowitz to discuss the

possibility of working together for the liberation of Lithuania. The meeting ended badly: the Lithuanian delegation was unwilling to provide an unqualified acknowledgment of Lithuanian complicity in the Holocaust, and Leibowitz determined it was impossible to work with them. Such encounters no doubt reinforced support for separation.²²

Lithuanian nationalists would not be the only Europeans for whom such acknowledgment would be unbearable, because some of their national liberation heroes had used the Nazi occupation to destroy Jewish communities they regarded as loyal to the hated Soviet regime. Moreover, Polish and Ukrainian political prisoners—nationalists who had been persecuted by the Soviets—resented Jewish competition for victim status; such status entailed better treatment in the camp and rehabilitation prospects.²³ The acrimony was a sign of things to come forty years later in Canada.

The question of Nazi war criminals in Canada exercised Jewish leaders who regarded their residence there as a persistence of the anti-Semitism that had callously excluded Jewish refugees in the 1930s. Indeed, "the Jewish community was the first victim of the Canadian post-war system of immunity for war criminals," wrote David Matas, a local lawyer, former chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress's (CJC) Legal Committee on War Crimes, and representative of the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith.²⁴ He and other Jewish leaders bitterly resented that it was apparently easier for such criminals to emigrate to Canada after the war than for Jewish DPs. It was a "moral outrage" that "massive numbers" of them—Germans and their Slavic and Baltic collaborators—had found a "haven" in the country, thereby creating "a political constituency for doing nothing."²⁵ Tolerating their presence was tantamount to "allowing the victims to be murdered not once, but twice. First their lives would have been obliterated, then their deaths."²⁶ The government's lack of interest in prosecutions evinced an absence of "any moral sensibility about the Holocaust," complained Irwin Cotler, a legal academic and CJC president between 1977 and 1980. "The Holocaust itself is reduced to a footnote. There is no sense, no appreciation about the horrors of the Holocaust." It also was outrageous that efforts to bring war criminals to justice could be dismissed as "Jewish revenge."²⁷ Jewish deaths were not grievable in Canada, he and Matas were saying, and it was time to challenge this travesty.

The solicitor general in the Trudeau government in the early 1980s, Robert Kaplan, raised the question at a high level by pushing the investigation of a former Einsatzgruppen member, whom he had extradited from Canada to Germany in 1983. Sol Littman, the Canadian director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, founding editor of the *Canadian Jewish News*, and first director of League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith, wrote a book about the case and claimed that twenty-eight war criminal suspects who had belonged to the Ukrainian SS units

were living in Canada.²⁸ After questions were raised in Parliament, the Canadian government established the Commission of Inquiry on War Criminals in Canada, known as the Deschênes Commission, in 1985 to investigate such allegations. Cotler became the CJC's chief counsel at the commission in 1986.

The commission's mandate immediately raised the hackles of Ukrainian and Baltic communities, which felt collectively defamed. Two dimensions were particularly vexing; the prospect of the commission's soliciting evidence from the Soviet Union, whose anti-Ukrainian position they naturally distrusted, and the commission's singular focus on crimes committed during the Second World War, which effectively limited them to those against Jews. Stalinist crimes against Ukrainians in the 1930s were omitted. If the Jewish community and government were truly interested in cleansing the country of war criminals, why not include communist crimes and seek out suspects who had migrated to Canada? "Limiting the work of the Deschênes Commission only to Nazi criminals is selective and incomplete justice," complained the Ukrainian Canadian historian Roman Serbyn.²⁹ Matas's and Cotler's responses to this point could not get around the commission's partial focus.³⁰ Nor did Cotler deny that ethnic "slurs" had been made against Ukrainian and Lithuanian Canadians as a result of the war crimes campaign. But he wondered why they resisted the commission's work all the same and were so sensitive when other migrants groups like Germans seemed less outraged.³¹

As might be expected, Ukrainian Canadian community activists mobilized against "the unfounded allegations about 'Nazi war criminals' in Canada," establishing the Civil Liberties Commission in 1984; two years later it became the Ukrainian Canadian Civil Liberties Association (UCCLA), one of the main players in the CMHR controversy in addition to the establishment Ukrainian Canadian Congress (UCC).³² At the same time, the UCCLA launched a campaign for an official accounting of the Ukrainian internment during and immediately after the First World War, including an investigation of the internees' confiscated property. Those victims needed public grieving while Jewish ones were in the headlines. The public memory stakes were escalating.

Ultimately, the Deschênes Commission was a disappointment for Jewish leaders, yielding only a few deportations and no convictions—outcomes they attributed to the bureaucratic inertia and general apathy regarding Jewish suffering about which they had long complained.³³ Another strategy of accumulating grievability lay in having each Canadian province legislate for Holocaust Memorial Day, and this became a major project of the 1990s. Now the Holocaust was not to be remembered only for the victims' sake but was made relevant for all Canadians by drawing human rights lessons from its history. Thus the Manitoban legislation of 2000 for "Yom Hashoah or the Day of the Holocaust" states that it "is an opportune day to reflect on and educate about the enduring lessons of the

Holocaust and to reaffirm a commitment to uphold human rights and to value the diversity and multiculturalism of Manitoban society."³⁴ The next year saw the introduction of a teacher's guide for Holocaust Memorial Day that included the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith's "Holocaust and Hope" program.³⁵

The League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith is an organization "dedicated to combating antisemitism, racism, and bigotry" and protecting the "human rights of all Canadians."³⁶ The former Canadian branch of the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) embraced the language of human rights garb as it became prevalent in Canada in the early 1970s.³⁷ The ADL agenda remained in the league's dual mission of countering both anti-Semitism and "hate group activity" more generally, thereby uniting the particular (protecting Jews) with the universal (protecting everyone).³⁸ Including the Holocaust in the mandate was straightforward because the league attributed its causes to anti-Semitism: the Holocaust was the ultimate hate crime. Accordingly, the lesson to draw was toleration—along the lines of the Museum of Tolerance of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles.³⁹ For such institutions, the universal and particular harmonized foremost in the protection of Jews, because they were the universal victim.

The universalizing agenda linking the Holocaust with genocide prevention and human rights was explained in 1992 by Matas in an article revealingly called "Remembering the Holocaust Can Prevent Future Genocides." Extolling the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith's "Holocaust and Hope" program, "which offers to Canadian educators tours of the death camps of Europe, followed by a visit to Israel," he gave a number of reasons for Holocaust memory's significance. Besides remembering the victims, it was necessary to use the Holocaust as an analogical resource: when we are so moved by the plight of contemporary refugees as to extend them a haven because they remind us of Jewish refugees, the Holocaust was performing its redemptive function. Never subtle, Matas added that the related and primary function of Holocaust memory was atonement: for the world was guilty of having stood by passively while Jews were murdered. "That dismal record means that the world must make atonement." Now it was imperative that this breach of human solidarity never recur, and non-Jews constantly recalling their implication in the genocide of the Jews would provide the necessary impetus.⁴⁰ Here a barely concealed sacrificial, indeed pseudo-Christian logic—that the Jews died for the world's moral redemption—combined with the Jewish tradition of *Tikkun olam b'malchut Shaddai*: repairing a (broken) world beneath God's sovereignty.⁴¹

Nineteen years later, Lubomyr Luciuk of the UCCLA published a book on the Ukrainian internment operations, also declaring a "time for atonement"—with a similar message: "The timely and honourable redress called for will help ensure that no other Canadian ethnic, religious, or racial minority will ever suffer as Canada's Ukrainians once did."⁴² For the UCC and UCCLA, Ukrainians were

also a universal victim. Two could play the grievability game of atonement. But who would win?

By the late 1990s, the game had moved to a different field: a national Holocaust exhibition or museum. In 1998, the CJC and B'nai Brith managed to have the notion of a dedicated Holocaust gallery placed on the agenda of a revamped Canadian War Museum. A subcommittee of the Canadian Senate considered public submissions on the matter, eliciting by-now-familiar positions. Opposing the proposition were Ukrainian Canadians, whose submission pleaded for a separate genocide museum or a Holocaust exhibition with all victims of Nazism, including Slavs.⁴³ Further opposition crystallized in the form of Canadians for a Genocide Museum, a new coalition of immigrant communities, established that year. It would become another player in the CMHR debate over the years.⁴⁴ The subcommittee rejected the Holocaust gallery in the War Museum but did not rule out "a national Holocaust Gallery" in another context, although neither did it rule out a genocide gallery.⁴⁵

Disappointed but encouraged, Jewish groups pressed on. Eric Vernon, the CJC's director of government relations, was happy with the apparent "commitment on the table to establish a stand-alone Holocaust museum, which we now prefer to refer to as a Holocaust and human rights museum."⁴⁶ Unhappy with the drift of the discussion, Sarkis Assadourian, a Syrian-born politician of Armenian descent, tried to force the matter in a private members bill for an exhibition on crimes against humanity in the Canadian Museum of Civilization.⁴⁷ While supportive, the UCC continued to advocate a "federally funded Genocide Museum in Ottawa."⁴⁸ Caustic comments were irresistible. The *Canadian Jewish News* reported CJC president Moshe Ronen as suggesting that "lobbying for a genocide museum was being orchestrated by individuals who cannot tolerate the notion that the Holocaust was a form of genocide unlike any other, and that it is unique in history in terms of the size and scope of its murderous agenda." Ever a model of tact, Sol Littman accused John Gregorovich of the UCC of "issue envy" and of trying to portray Ukrainians as "victims." That was not allowed because, for him, they were perpetrators.⁴⁹

Whether the Holocaust reveals or conceals other genocides was the topic of discussion of before the Canadian Parliament's Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage when it invited community and museum representatives to speak in regard to Assadourian's bill in mid-2000.⁵⁰ James Kafieh, a former president of the Canadian Arab Federation and later legal counsel for the Canadian Islamic Congress, spoke for Canadians for a Genocide Museum, pleading for the "forgotten victims—the Gypsies, the Ukrainians, the Cambodians."⁵¹ Nate Leipicer, chair of the CJC's Holocaust Remembrance Committee, responded by declaring the Holocaust's uniqueness while trying to avoid giving offense to others: "All genocide, all human tragic events, are of equal importance. There's no question about that. We do not want to get into a contest on whose tragedy was larger

or who suffered more." Then came the inevitable qualification: "However, the Holocaust encompasses all genocide and all mass murders, wherever they happen and whenever they occur." On this basis, the CJC proposed "a Holocaust and human rights museum that would focus on the Holocaust as such and would also include the question of human rights."⁵² As always now, the human rights pedagogy would revolve around the Holocaust whose exhibition *as such* was the priority because it was an event of universal significance.

For the Jewish representatives like Sheldon Howard, director of government relations at B'nai Brith, it was possible to honor the Holocaust as unique—so it was "not just another example of state-sponsored killing in the 20th century"—"without in any way detracting from the other genocides perpetrated in the 20th century."⁵³ Here was the central anxiety expressed by Cotler before him. Plainly, Jewish leaders felt that the Holocaust was effectively concealed—a hidden genocide—if regarded as just another genocide. Such a diminution portended grave consequences for Jewish grievability by consigning Jews to the vulnerability they experienced before and during the Holocaust. This is the primal fear that animates the various Jewish memory campaigns. Only the world's recognition of its unique and universal features, with the concomitant atonement effect, would guarantee the safety of a tiny minority in a sea of potentially dangerous strangers. The imperative, therefore, was to have everyone believe that Holocaust memory was a universal good—that is, by deriving human rights from its history. Thus by embodying "universal" lessons, Howard continued, the Holocaust, could be a "central reference point" without "undermining the experience of other ethnic groups."⁵⁴ This was a prescient statement, for that is what came to pass at the CMHR. As we will see, Jewish leaders and journalists interpreted criticism of its dedicated Holocaust-centrism as tantamount to effacing the presence of the Holocaust altogether, when the critics were in fact arguing that it should be displayed like other genocides.

Subsequent speakers from other groups gestured to these points before the subcommittee: the Holocaust's universal lessons of antiracism, toleration, and refraining from mass murder could be learned from other genocides, as well. But there was another lesson: the evil of hiddenness. The Serbian representative, Dr. Svetlana Cakarevic, spoke about "the forgotten genocide of Serbs" in World War II and asked why it is "covered up." The Armenian representative, Barry Khojajian, pointed out that Armenians "did not have a Diaspora the way other people had," so the memory of its genocide was constantly threatened with oblivion. Ukrainian, Arab, and Rwandan representatives urged an "equitable" and "inclusive" genocide museum while sometimes pointing out the special, even "unique" dimensions of their own experiences. In the event, the standing committee recommended that academic institutions conduct research on "all genocides and crimes against humanity."⁵⁵

The Absence of Aboriginal Canadians

At no point in these debates did participants consider the question of the first Canadians on whose land they lived. Could they have been victims of genocide as well? It was not as if the question had been ignored in other domains. It had not—but few were listening. At the very same time as the war crimes issue was gathering steam, in 1984, Judge Edwin C. Kimelman was chairing the Manitoban Review Committee on Indian and Métis Adoptions and Placements to investigate the so-called Sixties Scoop, the practice of forced adoption of Aboriginal children into non-Aboriginal families. Reporting that year, he wrote that “having now completed the review of the files . . . the Chairman now states unequivocally that cultural genocide has been taking place in a systematic, routine manner.”⁵⁶ This finding would be cited by anyone interested in Indigenous affairs in the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁷ Cultural genocide was also regularly alleged at the time by informed commentators, but they were few in number. Indigenous people were not yet fully grievable Canadians, judging by their absence at the parliamentary committee debates.⁵⁸

Events during the 1990s had underlined this outsider status in relation to the unfolding scandal of the residential schools into which Aboriginal children had been forced during most of the twentieth century. After mounting disquiet about the issue in the 1980s, Chief Phil Fontaine publicly disclosed his own abusive experiences in 1990, the same year as the violent land rights dispute by the town of Oka, Quebec, leading to the wide-ranging Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples in 1991. The Royal Commission heard testimony about criminal acts of sexual abuse and physical violence by authorities that utterly discredited the residential school system. Even so, the government declined to launch the public inquiry for which the commission called in its 1996 report. Apparently concerned about the legal consequences of an apology, in 1998 it issued a “statement of reconciliation” that was curtly rejected by Indigenous groups.⁵⁹ There could be no reconciliation before an apology and compensation. Or education. Some settler Canadians claimed ignorance of the residential schools and few registered the depth of Aboriginal feeling about the issue; after all, the residential schools had been designed for Indigenous uplift, they thought. Adoptions and residential schools, however coercive, did not resemble genocide in the public mind. The Holocaust did. The residential schools policy was a genocide that an activist clergyman claimed was “hidden from history.”⁶⁰ Writing in 1996, the historian J. R. Miller aptly observed that the Europeans’ “sin of interference has been replaced by the sin of indifference.”⁶¹

In response, Indigenous Canadians sought redress in the courts. Even the mixed results—nearly 15,000 survivors had tried to sue the government in individual and class actions, winning some \$110 million—brought pressure to bear on the government and churches, which had administered the residential schools. Along with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, which raised awareness

of the residential schools’ effects on Indigenous people, the suits led to negotiations that culminated in the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement of 2006.⁶² The agreement provided for a compensation process, support measures, commemorative activities, and establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that sits to this day.⁶³ The government apologized two years later. The first decade of the twenty-first century saw the eventual intersection of these Indigenous issues and the broader genocide debate.

The Unstable CMHR Synthesis

In the meantime, the Winnipeg-based media magnate Israel Asper was formulating an ingenious synthesis of these developments. The bitterness of the Deschênes Commission issue and the state’s reluctance to sponsor a Holocaust gallery or museum indicated the futility of memory wars with Ukrainian communal leaders who purported to represent over one million Canadians of Ukrainian descent, more than three times the number of Jewish Canadians. Moreover, Indigenous questions were now firmly on the table. Since 1997, Asper’s philanthropic foundation had run a Human Rights and Holocaust Studies Program in the venerable tradition of the League of Human Rights of B’nai Brith and the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance.⁶⁴ Might not the state support a human rights museum that included all citizens, especially Ukrainian and Indigenous Canadians? In 2003, Asper’s proposal of just such a project won the approval of the UCC with the promise that the “Ukrainian Famine/Genocide” would feature “very clearly, distinctly, and permanently,” as would the internment of Ukrainians during World War I.⁶⁵ “The museum will be the first place in the world where the famine will be given attention,” gushed the UCC’s executive director, Ostap Skrypnyk, gratified by the Jewish recognition of their grievability.⁶⁶ A separate Indigenous gallery also featured in the proposal.

Asper understood the line to take with the general public. His was to be a “museum for human rights, not the Holocaust,” and it was to “be totally apolitical and antiseptic in terms of trying to preach a message of one kind of inhumanity over another.” His staff spoke about “an all-inclusive Canadian genocide museum,” using the rhetoric of Canadians for a Genocide Museum and the UCCLA.⁶⁷ Nonetheless, the latter organizations opposed the Asper plan as a Holocaust museum in human rights disguise, because a central Holocaust gallery remained in the mix. True to their principles, they wanted equal treatment for all genocides, which meant no special treatment for the Holodomor or Indigenous people, either.⁶⁸ The envisaged outcome was the same as the UCC position, however: whether the Holodomor received a gallery like the Holocaust or they were both integrated into thematic exhibitions, each would be placed on pedestals of equal height. That was the point.

Jewish groups and supporters did not interpret the new venture as primarily a human rights museum, either. It was never meant to be like the International Red Cross and Crescent Museum in Geneva. To them, the CMHR's attraction was the Holocaust focus. The Asper Foundation press announcement about the project also made the Holocaust's centrality perfectly clear: a Holocaust gallery would be one of the permanent ones. "You may ask why there is a focus on the Holocaust in the Consequences Gallery. The Holocaust represents a singular, unprecedented event in human history."⁶⁹ Other Nazi victims were tacked on as if they were afterthoughts. In 2008, Gail Asper—who led the foundation after Israel's death in 2003—praised the fact that the CMHR "will contain the first national gallery in Canada dealing with the Holocaust." Here she reflected the official summary of the legislation that converted the Asper-led project into a national museum of the Canadian state. It reads: "The first national museum to be located outside of the National Capital Region, the CMHR is to be built in Winnipeg. It will house the largest museum gallery in Canada devoted to the subject of the Holocaust." Then follows the universal pitch a few lines later: "One of the goals of Canada's museum policy is to facilitate the access of all Canadians to their cultural heritage."⁷⁰ The government legislative summary thereby mirrored the Holocaust-human rights relationship advanced by Jewish organizations since the 1970s. If the reconciliation of the particular and universal was perfectly obvious to Asper and his supporters, the reaction of other Canadians suggests that it was not readily apparent to them. The CHMR controversy shows that fulfilling both of these intentions is a Sisyphean task.

Academics from both sides weighed in on the matter. Barney Sneiderman, a law professor at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, had objected to "Holocaust bashing" and "the profaning of history," arguing that the "Holocaust is unique" after Lubomyr Luciuk had contested the Asper Foundation statement that "the Holocaust stands out as a unique event in history."⁷¹ Luciuk, the son of Ukrainian nationalist refugees, a political geography academic at the Royal Military College of Canada and a leading figure in the UCCLA, responded by declaring that "all genocide victims must be hallowed." It is worth considering his case in detail because it contains all the elements of the Ukrainian campaign for the Holodomor's equal, grievable status in the CMHR.

If the continental reach of the Holocaust was remarkable, he wrote, so were features of the Holodomor: "more Ukrainians perished in the terror famine than all the Jews murdered in the six years of the second world war," citing a much-disputed statistic. Moreover while the Holocaust was ended by conquering armies, the "man-made Famine started and ended when Stalin said so." Although Holocaust survivors could speak out, Holodomor survivors were fearful because they had to cover up their Ukrainian nationality to emigrate to Canada. It was therefore difficult to challenge the genocide deniers—even in

Ukraine, where former Soviet "apparatchiks remain influential." So while "the Holocaust's engineers were punished, Ukraine's reapers haven't faced justice." What is more, Luciuk continued, Moscow could restrict the archives with impunity. "The Russians even lobbied at the United Nations to ensure the Holodomor was not declared genocide. Would German diplomats dare to sidebar the Shoah? Inconceivable." He concluded by declaring "unique" the Holodomor's obscurity and advocating for continuing efforts to "ensure we never learn more."⁷² The museum would only be successful if it meant that "many millions of Ukraine's victims are not marginalized, somehow made less worthy of memory than the Holocaust's victims. The Holodomor was arguably the greatest act of genocide in 20th century Europe. Recognizing that would not only ensure that the proposed Canadian Museum for Human Rights is a unique institution, it would make it a truly world class one as well."⁷³ Luciuk was saying that part of the trauma of the Holodomor was its hiddenness.

At the same time, Luciuk was campaigning to revoke the Pulitzer Prize for Walter Duranty because he had concealed the Holodomor as a *New York Times* journalist in the 1930s. By calling his book *Not Worthy: Walter Duranty's Pulitzer Prize and the New York Times*, Luciuk was underlining the message of the Ukrainians' ungrievability. It was time to teach the world otherwise: "This project was launched with very modest resources by a small group of activists who were able to remind the world of what arguably was the single greatest act of mass murder to take place in Europe during the 20th century."⁷⁴ The Ukrainian communal organizations competed with Jewish ones in accessing the levers of power. In 2005, a private member's bill to recognize the "internment of persons of Ukrainian origin" was passed, providing for compensation, the mounting of commemorative plaques by the UCCLA, and other memorializing activities at former internment sites. However gratifying, these minor victories did not translate into the ability to determine the contents of the CMHR. The Ukrainians were losing this game.

After building construction commenced in April 2009, the museum leadership established a Content Advisory Committee (CAC) "comprising 17 human rights scholars and acknowledged experts from across Canada." As its 2010 report states, "Many of its members had been part of a previous Human Rights Advisory Committee established in 2005 by the Friends of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights to provide guidance during the planning process of the Museum, or part of its successor, the Friends Content Advisory Committee." The report notes further that "the initial advisors to the Friends and the exhibition designers Ralph Appelbaum and Associates for the Exhibit Master Plan (2005) were Yude Henteleff, Constance Backhouse, David Matas, Ruth Selwyn and Ken Norman."⁷⁵ Henteleff, like Matas, a lawyer and Asper confidante, was also a B'nai Brith leader, serving on its Advisory Board on National Holocaust Task Force Leadership.⁷⁶

These figures, with the exception of Selwyn, "led the story-gathering tour across Canada" on which the report was based; the idea was to have the museum incorporate Canadians' human rights stories in its exhibition.

In the event, the report bears a remarkable resemblance to Matas's views. Those who ventriloquized the Asper Foundation and B'nai Brith line are given disproportionate space in the report, especially in comparison with Ukrainian-Canadian voices. Summaries of the interviews conveniently supported the B'nai Brith vision and the Asper vision:

Those [interviewees] who advocated that the Museum should recognize the centrality of the Holocaust emphasized that it is the Holocaust that provides our paradigm for understanding the causes and processes of all mass, state-sponsored violence, as well as provides the inspiration for human rights protection on a world-wide scale. As such, it merits a permanent home and a major focus within the Museum. With such an essential foundation secured, the Museum can and should explore relationships between other genocides and the Nazi atrocities: for example, how the Nazis learned from the earlier genocide in Armenia.⁷⁷

No effort was made to conceal Matas's involvement in the story-gathering process. One Holocaust survivor referred to a film about Raoul Wallenberg that "also emphasized the involvement of Canada and Canadians such as David Matas, a member of the CAC, in the efforts to discover the fate of Mr. Wallenberg."⁷⁸ No reader would be surprised to come to the report's fifteenth recommendation that simply repeated the gist of these statements and cited two papers by Matas as authority in the accompanying endnote.

15. The Museum should position the Holocaust as a separate zone at the centre of the Museum, showing the centrality of the Holocaust to the overall human rights story and in prompting the creation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, with its grounding in the idea of common humanity. The story of human rights told in other parts of the Museum should bring home to visitors the core messages of the Holocaust, including the message that learning and acting on the lessons of the Holocaust—that respecting human rights—give hope that nothing like the Holocaust will ever happen again.⁷⁹

In retrospect, it is astonishing that the museum leadership thought no one would notice the transparent attempt to lend the air of consultative legitimacy to the imposition of a partisan vision on a national museum. Other Canadians did notice. And they complained bitterly.⁸⁰

Needless to say, the UCC felt that the deal sealed in 2003 had been broken.⁸¹ The feared trauma of renewed hiddenness was now a real prospect. The

presence of so many communal Holocaust museums and memorials in Canada meant that it was "in no danger of being forgotten," wrote Luciuk, while the "catastrophe that befell many millions of non-Jews enslaved or murdered by the Nazis—including the Roma, Catholics, the disabled, Poles, Ukrainians, Soviet POWs, homosexuals and others—will be obfuscated in the proposed museum."⁸² Being "lumped" in the mass atrocity gallery was considered particularly objectionable. As before, the UCC wanted a Holodomor gallery like the Holocaust one, while the UCCLA advocated a nonhierarchical vision of twelve galleries that are "thematic, comparative and inclusive." Otherwise, in the words of the Ukraine-born consultant and former UCC office bearer Oksana Bashuk Hepburn, "It's as if the museum's, indeed, Canada's message is to exonerate the Soviet crimes."⁸³

Ukrainian Canadians were not the only ones to complain. Roger W. Smith, chair of the Armenian-affiliated International Institute for Genocide Studies, wrote in support of the genocide concept at the museum, arguing that

[t]here must be a scientific and scholarly basis for the CMHR's decision-making process, including the designation of its galleries. It is our belief that the comparative approach to various cases of genocide, based on the principle of inclusiveness, provides such a scholarly standard, whereas allocating a whole gallery to only one case, while lumping all others into a single gallery called "Mass Atrocity," relativizes and thereby trivializes those other cases.⁸⁴

George Shirinian, executive director of the Armenian Zoryan Institute, was happy for the Holocaust to be a "prime model of how to teach genocide"—but not the only one: "it is critical to realize that other cases are necessary, as each provides its own particular lessons to be learned." This was an argument echoed by University of Ottawa political scientist David Petrasek, who had worked for Amnesty International and the U.N. High Commission for Human Rights. In his experience, he observed, "each genocide unfolds in its own unique and uniquely horrible ways. The truth is that a deep understanding of the Holocaust provides few parallels that would aid in understanding the events leading up to, for example, the genocidal Anfal against the Kurds of Iraq in 1988 (other than the banal lesson that dictators can't be trusted)."⁸⁵ In other words, contrary to arguments of Jewish communal leaders, the Holocaust did not encompass all other genocides and could not function as the "ultimate prototype."⁸⁶ Political benefits also accrued to a comparative approach, Shirinian averred.

Taking a comprehensive and comparative approach to genocide as the ultimate violation of human rights would complement perfectly the objectives of Canada's official policy of multiculturalism. It would avoid differentiating and dividing communities. It especially would make those

communities who feel their histories have been neglected or denied feel more welcome. One can not overestimate the psychological trauma of those who are part of a nation that has experienced genocide.⁸⁷

The Ukrainian-led campaign began to bite by early 2011 as politicians lined up to plea for the Holodomor's equal status in the museum.⁸⁸ In the face of scholarly criticism—Sam Moyn, author of an influential book on human rights in history, was flown in from New York—the museum also revised its claim that the Holocaust had animated the human rights revolution. It now stressed that, since Nazi Germany was the best-documented and best-known assault on human rights, it would have the greatest pedagogical impact and should therefore receive its own gallery.⁸⁹ Although non-Jewish victims of the Nazis and Lemkin's generic genocide concept would be included in that gallery, it would still be named after the Holocaust—as Asper and so many donors had expected and as the museum's legislative summary indicated.

Even so, the impression that academic consultants were diluting the Content Advisory Committee Report vision set off alarm bells in the Jewish community. Yude Henteleff told a University of Manitoba audience, "If this [position of the Holocaust separate zone] is in any way diminished it will significantly impair the museum in carrying out its stated objectives as noted in its enabling legislation."⁹⁰ The anxiety that the Holocaust would be hidden if its specific gallery was abandoned was acutely expressed by the editor of the *Winnipeg Jewish Review*, Rhona Spivak. "Should we as a Jewish community keep in mind that in the not too distant future there will be no more survivors alive, to educate first hand about the Holocaust—which will make exhibits in museums all the more important educational tools?"⁹¹ Journalist supporters like Martin Knelman hoped that "sanity will prevail" with the failed "effort to reduce the destruction of European Jewry to just another genocide."⁹² Plainly, having the Holocaust depicted as just another genocide was an unbearable proposition that would undermine the project of Jewish grievability.

At length, David Matas, now the senior honorary counsel to B'nai Brith Canada, spoke out to defend his vision of the museum. This time he argued that the Holocaust lens illuminated Aboriginal Canadian suffering while persisting with the now discredited myth about the causal relationship between the Holocaust and the so-called human rights revolution. "Revulsion to the Holocaust generated a paradigm shift from the stratification of humanity to the equality of humanity," he declared. Consequently, "the notion of aboriginals as equals became prevalent. The shift to human rights meant discriminatory and abusive practices inflicted on aboriginals either ended or lessened." What is more, he continued, the United Nations' human rights regime "resonated with the global aboriginal community," conveniently omitting the fact that cultural genocide was cut from the Genocide Convention and needed to be compensated in

other instruments decades later as a result of persistent Indigenous activism rather than Holocaust memory. In a remarkable display of special pleading, he went so far as to argue that "without the commitment to human rights generated by the Holocaust experience, non-aboriginals might be continuing those abusive practices [of residential schools and forced adoptions] to this day."⁹³ That it was in the name of the human right to education and other emoluments of civilization that Indigenous children were taken does not appear to have been considered.

An alternative vision was expressed by Canadians for Genocide Education—the rebadged Canadians for a Genocide Museum—in their submission to a CMHR roundtable discussion. Rather than arguing that the Holocaust should be privileged in order to draw attention to Indigenous suffering, the group—or, rather, the Palestinian Canadian lawyer James Kafieh who signed the submission⁹⁴—argued that Indigenous suffering warranted the privileged position because of its intrinsic relationship to Canada.

It is our position that the genocide of Canada's First Nations and Inuit is the only case of genocide that deserves special status in the CMHR as this genocide happened in Canada and is a defining aspect of all that Canada is today. Our prosperity is premised on the resources taken from and then denied to our First Nations and Inuit. In addition, this human rights museum is to be built on their stolen land.⁹⁵

Here was an anticolonial manifesto that would challenge Asper's vision of the CMHR—and the State of Israel, as Kafieh perhaps intended. It is no surprise that its recommendation to weight the displays "towards lesser-known cases of human rights abuses and genocide that have been historically marginalized or neglected" was ignored.⁹⁶

Indigenous Analogizings

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people did not need settler Canadians to represent them in this debate. Their leaders spoke out clearly enough about genocide and destruction—although not in relation to the CMHR, perhaps because some of them were consulted about the Indigenous gallery and museum site. In 2011, Daniel N. Paul, a Mi'kmaq elder, made the headlines when his article "The Hidden History of the Americas: The Destruction and Depopulation of the Indigenous Civilisations of the Americas by European Invaders," published in the Australian-based journal *Settler Colonial Studies*, was picked up by Canadian newspapers. Exasperated by European cultural arrogance, he reversed the barbarism/civilization binary by accusing the Europeans of barbarism for their blindness to "American Indian civility" and their attempt to destroy Indians and exploit the environment. Indeed, he averred,

these actions were unique though unacknowledged. It was “a long denied fact: the dispossession of the Indigenous Peoples of the Americas by Europeans, and the near extermination of them in the process, is the greatest inhuman barbarity that this World has ever known.” What prevented this recognition was Indians’ “ongoing invisibility.”⁹⁷ Indigenous grievability was hindered by its hiddenness.

In this case, the genocide concept’s popular association with the Holocaust concealed rather than revealed the Indigenous experience, contrary to Matas’s claim. For the historian John Reid denied Paul could use “essentially a 20th century term . . . to understand 18th century realities,” although he conceded that “what happened in the 18th century is a process of imperial expansion that was ruthless at times, that cost lives.”⁹⁸ Indignant at Paul’s argument, Kyle Matthews, the senior deputy director at the Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies, complained that genocide was “a divisive term,” pointing to the CMHR controversy: “You can see different cultural communities in Canada wanting their collective human suffering recognized with the same weight as others.” He too was prepared to concede that European colonial rhetoric about Indians evinced “some genocidal intent” but declined to use the genocide term because of its problematic “overuse.”⁹⁹ A proponent of the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, Matthews presumably would have denied that genocide was taking place against Indians during colonial conquest and would not have supported the West’s humanitarian intervention to protect them; after all, Europeans were committing the genocide.¹⁰⁰ The next year, in 2012, the chairman of Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), Justice Murray Sinclair, used the term in relation to the residential schools policy: “the reality is that to take children away and to place them with another group in society for the purpose of racial indoctrination was—and is—an act of genocide and it occurs all around the world.”¹⁰¹ Predictably, he too met resistance, and the term did not make it into the TRC’s interim report. Government officials fell about themselves to avoid the topic.¹⁰²

Understandably, some Indigenous leaders are angered and frustrated by the treatment their peoples have endured and continue to experience. Sometimes these traumatic associations were expressed in attention-grabbing slogans and blunt equations. For example, in October 2012, two former chiefs, Terry Nelson and Dennis Pashe, appeared on Iranian television to denounce Canada’s reserve system as “concentration camps” and the six hundred First Nations women who have disappeared over the past decade as “part of the ongoing effort by the Canadian government to exterminate us.”¹⁰³ Needless to say, these statements—and the location whence they were uttered—generated momentary controversy, but more significant was the rebuke of other Indigenous leaders. “I’m scared to even compare that tragedy [the Holocaust] with our history,” said Birdtail Sioux First Nation Chief Kenneth Chalmers. “That’s not acceptable. It’s totally different. We’re not lining up for gas chambers.”¹⁰⁴

On another occasion, Chief Phil Fontaine criticized Nelson for making anti-Jewish remarks on behalf of the Assembly of First Nations, because First Nations people should know better than to trade in stereotypes. Indeed, he continued, “no group in Canadian society is more familiar with racism, racial hatred and violence than the First Nations. Not only do our people put up with individual acts of discrimination on a daily basis, we continuously struggle with the effects of systemic discrimination designed to wipe out our languages and culture.” Striking about Fontaine’s statement was his invocation of this particular experience to connect with other Canadians by using a spatial metaphor of nonhierarchical partnership rather than a temporal one of precedent or a visual one of a lens or prism through which others’ experiences must be telescoped, focused, or refracted.

There is certainly a need for greater public education about issues such as the Holocaust. As well, we need public education about the history of First Peoples in Canada and the cultural genocide perpetrated by the Indian Residential Schools. Our goal in learning about one another, however, is to build bridges, not to burn them or to block them. There is no place for over-the-top rhetoric or unacceptable statements.

First Nations, Jews, gays and lesbians, Muslims, people of colour and others are targeted by hate mongers because of our differences. We must support each other and in so doing we will send a strong message to those who would discriminate against us.¹⁰⁵

Here was the solidarity that Judith Butler anticipated when a person apprehends his or her precariousness.¹⁰⁶ Because Indigenous people are subject to the greatest degree of precarity, it is perhaps no surprise that their leaders are able to reach out like this. Not from a claim of primacy, or from one of a hidden genocide, still less because one regards the other as threatening, but out of recognized suffering and mutual empathy—this is the basis of the ethically preferable subject position.

So does the Holocaust reveal or conceal genocides? The answer depends on how one analogizes. The David Matas approach is indentured to the atonement effect and sets up a monumental threshold that provokes the very people whom he thinks he is helping. An alternative is presented by the Métis literature scholar Warren Cariou in his remarkable reflection, “Going to Canada.”¹⁰⁷ Visiting Auschwitz, he was shocked to see a building called Canada marked on a map of the Auschwitz camps. It must have been named by Canadians, he surmised, because it was “a byword for freedom, for human rights and for justice.” Or because the building was source of hope or a hiding place. In fact, it was where the Nazis stored loot stolen from inmates. This was his second shock.

Going to see the site, he saw that the Nazis had burned down the building; now all that remained were stumps, piles of ashes, and a few twisted spoons.

This unsettling experience led to an unsettling analogy, "not because Canada has any real connection to the horrific events that occurred in Birkenau, but because the juxtaposition of the two Canadas in my mind brings up a disturbing metaphor, a different lens for picturing my home." The new vision was of Canada as at once a storehouse of vast, stolen wealth and a place of burned ashes, "as if to obliterate the traces of what has happened there." Cariou stresses that he is "not interested in arguing for equivalences among the various atrocities the world has known." In this he differs from Nelson and Pashe. He does not "want to make any claims that anything that has happened in Canada is equal to what happened in the Holocaust, or that arithmetic of any other quantifiable method can be used to calculate the degree of any crime against humanity." Echoing Fontaine's noncompetitive ethic, he continues that "each group of victims deserves the dignity of not having their suffering measured against anyone else's." What interests him are parallels and contiguities so he can answer "the most difficult questions that the twentieth century left with us: Why do these terrible things happen again and again?" Like Daniel Paul, he challenges the civilized conceit of the West: "How can they occur in supposedly civil societies, in communities that think of themselves as generous and enlightened?"¹⁰⁸

In the end he does not try to answer this question. Instead, he is interested in Indigenous authors' responses to their experiences. He observes that these authors "expose a legacy of theft and dehumanization that indigenous people in this country have had to live with for many generations." They challenge the redemptive view of Canadians "as people of justice and civility and freedom and generosity" that Cariou dismisses as "simply a product of those cover-up stories that almost always come after violence." Such stories have replaced the older heroic colonial narrative but perform the same function.¹⁰⁹ Referring to the CMHR, he notes that it promotes itself as "a powerful symbol of Canada's unwavering commitment to recognizing, promoting and celebrating human rights," commenting that "this characterization of Canada bespeaks either a breathtaking naiveté or a willful ignorance. Anyone familiar with our colonial history knows that Canada has 'wavered' a great deal on the questions of human rights over the generations."¹¹⁰ Will the CMHR be able to disavow the founding violence that made the state and its museum a possibility?

Cariou's analogizing also went in the other direction. His witnessing of the Canadian oil sands region where the life and lands of the local peoples were devastated by mining and development reminded him "of that obliterated warehouse in Birkenau. It is a place of almost unbelievable wealth, but at the same time a place of ashes, a place in which the land itself is literally being stolen from the people who have depended upon it for generations." The oil goes to power the Canadian economy at expense of native peoples and the environment.¹¹¹ In this link, he discovered Canada's "suppressed histories, silenced

people, uncomfortable juxtapositions." This use of the Holocaust reveals another Canada, but not that about which Matas and the Asper family, proud patriots, were thinking.

Conclusion

The passionate if ill-tempered CMHR debate is more significant than the much-derided competition for victimhood. Rival conceptions of evil are being advanced for public consideration and official endorsement. Where supporters of the CMHR constantly point to the fact that the Holocaust is the "best documented"—that is, most recognized—genocide as grounds for its central gallery, Ukrainians and most other migrant and Indigenous groups contend that the salient lesson—and evil—is the fact that their story of suffering has been so overlooked and hidden compared to the Jewish one. The evil lies in nonrecognition. Indeed, far from making the case for the Holocaust gallery, the abundant documentation and high profile of the Holocaust could be grounds *against* granting central status in the museum. The next attendant question inevitably concerns why some genocides are hidden—or not even considered genocides—and others are not. Is it a question of power making knowledge, as Roman Serbyn, the Ukrainian Canadian historian and onetime chair of the UCC's Subcommittee on a Genocide Museum, suggests about the Jewish success in establishing the Holocaust in public consciousness? Or do specific features of the Holocaust mark it as uniquely unique, as the CMHR advocates suggest, invoking supposedly neutral academic writers like Steven Katz?¹¹²

That particular interests are advanced under the guise of universal claims is difficult to ignore. For one thing, the insistence on the universal Jewish victim is indented to the conviction that Jewish welfare is an index of welfare for everyone—a conviction that James Kafieh would justifiably dispute. At the same time, is it true, as Lubomyr Luciuk avers, that "being inclusive and equitable takes nothing away from hallowing the Shoah"?¹¹³ Certainly, the Canadian Jewish leaders, journalists, and academics cited here would disagree. But it is not as if the Ukrainians and Canadians for Genocide Education are blind to the Holocaust's obviously distinctive features; that much is clear after a decade of debate. Perhaps that is why they want lesser-known cases of genocide and human rights violations displayed. If so, are genocide and crimes against humanity adequate memory concepts when they are being deployed specifically *against* the Holocaust?¹¹⁴ If Jews claim universal significance for their particular experience, can it be said that particular interests are being advanced by the universal concept of genocide? Such use of Lemkin's concept would not accord with his intentions. The new Institute for Research of Genocide in Canada is plainly a Bosnian operation, just as Canadians for Genocide Education includes virtually every

Canadian migrant and ethnic group except Jewish ones, who have declined invitations to join.¹⁵

What about the power/knowledge/memory nexus with which we began? The success of the UCC's own memory activism suggests that it is difficult to pry them apart. Its National Holodomor Education Committee can boast advances in having Holodomor Memorial Day commemorated in some school districts, and in introducing teachers to its Holodomor pedagogical resources.¹⁶ This strategy sounds familiar. Not to be outdone by the Jewish effort to erect a Holocaust memorial (rather than a museum) in Ottawa—the national Holocaust monument was approved in March 2011—Ukrainians and other groups founded Tribute to Liberty in 2009 to lobby and raise money for a memorial to victims of “totalitarian communism” in the national capital as well. “Victims of the atrocities committed by Communist regimes have not received recognition for their suffering,” it declared. “This is beginning to change: archives have been opened and the truth can no longer be hidden.” The theme of hidden suffering featured in the organization's newsletters, which carried a story on “history unhidden” in each issue.¹⁷ The memorial also “will raise Canada's and the world's awareness of ‘the most colossal case of political carnage in history’ (*The Black Book of Communism*).”¹⁸ Here was a uniqueness claim of a different type. So far, the campaign has succeeded in having the government set aside a plot of land, and it is only a matter of time before the funds are raised to erect it there. Then Ottawa will have Holocaust and Holodomor monuments.

Finally, does the CMHR debate do justice to the Indigenous experience—the most Canadian of them all—when it mostly concerns wrangling over events that occurred in Europe more than a half-century ago? The UCCLA position entails removing the Indigenous gallery as well, after all. The virtually exclusive attention on the European theater casts most settler Canadians as victims, conveniently hiding the settler-Indigene binary and settler racism toward Aboriginal peoples. Memory debates in settler colonial states like Canada and Australia necessarily must contend with the particular legacies of those states' foundations, yet there seems little interest in an unflinching examination of this legacy at the CMHR beyond the platitudes of the human rights agenda. This agenda, it could be said, is implicated in the attempted erasure of Indigenous cultures by the forcible imposition of “civilization” upon them. The (cultural) genocide concept is apposite for such collective experiences, but it is conspicuously absent from the museum in this case. Significantly, the Harper government's 2008 apology to Canada's First Nations people is never mentioned during these CMHR debates. The Holocaust gets a national remembrance day in Canada, but not Canada's treatment of Indigenous people.

The power/knowledge/memory nexus lies at the heart of these disputes; Indigenous peoples simply do not dispose over the resources—recall the

migrant-group organizations' government liaison staff and various national committees with their grandiose titles—to lobby extensively for their memory claims. Any advances they have achieved have been won through persistent activism, like the individual and class action lawsuits that brought the government to the negotiating table about the residential schools. They have been the authors of their own success rather than passive beneficiaries of Holocaust memory, contrary to David Matas's fable. While some settler Canadians may regard them as privileged because of the dedicated Indigenous gallery, will the question of Indigenous genocide be raised in the museum? The Canadian Museum for Human Rights has raised the public profile of genocides, if only by the controversy it has unleashed, but in doing so has it hidden others?

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NOTES

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