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The Nizkor Project and the Fight Against Holocaust-Denial

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The Nizkor Project and the Fight Against Holocaust-Denial

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Recent attempts by the U.S. Congress to limit pornography and hate speech on the Internet have focused attention on a medium where anonymity has encouraged those who might not say something in person, for fear of ostracism, to nevertheless say those very things online. Yes, hate speech is alive and well on the Internet.

One of the most offensive forms of free speech on the Internet is Holocaust-denial. The USENET newsgroup *alt. revisionism* is just one of the many places where Holocaust "revisionists" post their messages arguing that millions of people did NOT die in extermination camps at the hands of Nazi Germany. They claim it is just a hoax perpetrated by Zionists and Jews to blackmail Germany (in the form of reparation payments) and gain legitimacy for the State of Israel. Young people, of course, are often the targets of revisionists because they are naturally skeptical of the "establishment." This is why Bradley R. Smith of the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust http://www.codoh.com has spent the past several years attempting to place revisionist ads in college newspapers.

Rather than censoring the deniers, many individuals have decided to answer and refute their absurd claims with facts, illustrating how the Internet can police itself without restricting speech. Since 1991, Ken McVay http://www.nizkor.org/contributors/mcvay-ken.html has, in his spare time, amassed an enormous database of information to refute the revisionists. McVay's ongoing effort, for which he has been honored with the Order of British Columbia, is now known as the Nizkor Project http://www.nizkor.org, after the Hebrew word for "we will remember." One of those who has worked closely with McVay is Jamie McCarthy http://www.nizkor.org/contributors/mccarthy-jamie.html, a computer programmer from Michigan who is co-webmaster of Nizkor. McCarthy became involved in the fight against Holocaust-denial in the Spring of 1992 after he came across a revisionist posting while 'net surfing. "That night," he told me recently, "I went to the local university library to look up an explicit reference [the revisionist had given to back up his claim] there was nothing there; the next morning, I posted what I'd found. It's kind of gone on like that since then."

Nizkor is actually a collection of several projects, many of which are useful for librarians and scholars. By far, the largest component is the Shofar FTP Archive http://www.nizkor.org/ftp.cgi, a collection of over 13,000 files containing original documents, reports, and articles that illustrate the Holocaust. Much of this material was typed by McVay, who has battled tendonitis, and his volunteers, although money and equipment that has been donated to the project now allows for quicker scanning. The Archive contains information on individuals, camps, places, and organizations. A recent addition is the U.S. Office of Strategic Services' files http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/h/hitler-adolf/oss-papers/text/ about Adolf Hitler. Slowly but surely, the entire collection of published Nuremberg documents http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/imt/ is being added as well. The FTP Archive, as well as the entire Nizkor site, can easily be searched by means of a newly added search engine http://search.nizkor.org/search.html. The Archive also contains relevant postings from alt.revisionism. Of course, USENET postings can also be retrieved through DejaNews http://www.dejanews.com.

The contents of the FTP Archive are being converted into HTML format by a team of volunteers known as the HWEB http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/ project. The goal is to eventually have an environment where the user can click on any name, place, camp, etc., and retrieve relevant documents, maps, and/or text. An audio recording of Heinrich Himmler's famous Oct. 4, 1943 Posen speech http://www.nizkor.org/hweb/people/h/himmler-heinrich/posen/oct-04-43/ has recently been added to the Archive, and is indicative of the kind of multimedia information that Nizkor is moving toward.

Nizkor has also prepared several FAQs: http://www.nizkor.org/faqs/, on Auschwitz; the Operation Reinhard camps; the Institute for Historical Review (IHR); and the Leuchter Report, which had attempted to prove that the gas chambers at Auschwitz- Birkenau could not have been used for homicidal purposes. There is also a point-by-point rebuttal of the IHR's (in)famous "66 Questions and Answers on the Holocaust" http://www.nizkor.org/features/qar/. The current FAQ, which has not yet been fully completed, is entitled "Deceit & Misrepresentation: The Techniques of Holocaust Denial" http://www.nizkor.org/features/techniques-of-denial/.

Nizkor's site contains many links to racist and revisionist web pages, so the user can see the ugly face of bigotry firsthand. Among the links to revisionist pages are: the Zundelsite http://www.webcom.com/ezundel/english/; the Institute for Historical Review http://www.kaiwan.com/~ihrgreg/; and the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust http://www.codoh.com. The popularity and importance of Nizkor has led to the establishment of several mirror sites, facilitating access. Thus, European users should get faster response time if they use the German mirror http://www1.de.nizkor.org/nizkor/. Other mirror sites include:

http://www1.ca.nizkor.org
http://www2.ca.nizkor.org
http://www3.ca.nizkor.org
http://www1.us.nizkor.org

Nizkor is currently working on a Teacher's Guide, and depends totally upon volunteers for contributions of both time and money.

There are several other interesting Web sites that deal with Holocaust-denial, but which are not as in-depth as Nizkor. These include: Shamash gopher://israel.nysernet.org:70/11/holocaust, and Gravediggers of Memory http://www.soe.usfca.edu/CIT/denial/home.html, an interesting collection of research papers written by students in a Historical Methods class at the University of San Francisco. Many Holocaust organizations also have home pages, some of which only provide information on the organization itself, rather than data on the Holocaust. Among these are: the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum http://www.ushmm.org; the Simon Wiesenthal Center http://www.wiesenthal.com; and Yad Vashem http://yvs.shani.net. Of course, many other sites can be located using Yahoo http://www.yahoo.com, or one of the other Web search engines.

About the Author: *John A. Drobnicki http://www.nizkor.org/contributors/drobnicki-john.html is currently Assistant Professor/Reference Librarian at York College http://www.york.cuny.edu of The City University of New York http://www.cuny.edu. He has been a contributor to Nizkor since the Summer of 1994.*

From the Editor's Keyboard

Dear Readers,

I am so delighted with the overwhelming response to my plea for article contributions! I welcome Gail Golderman back into the fold as queen of Internet in Review. Thanks to Catherine Hansen for another great article (see Reference Raft); Charles D.W. Morrison for a humorous and informative initiation into HTML (see For the Neophyte 'Netter); and Karen Bordonaro for New Lists. Wecome to three new contributors: John A.Drobnicki (Topic One); Shelly Warwick (Understanding the 'Net), and Lisa Flanzraich for her sweet review of *Internet for Cats*

These wonderfual contributors have made this issue very special. You all have my eternal gratitude!

Happy Holidays,

Laura K. Murray, Editor murraylc@slscva.sysadm.suny.edu

For the Neophyte 'Netter

How to Make a Web Page with as Little Labor as Possible:
Tips for the Complete Beginner

by Charles D.W. Morrison

So, you want to make a Web page? Well, you are about to have an adventure. Everyone should have a Web page. One good reason for having a Web page is that more and more employers want to know if you are computer literate. If you have your resume, a personal home page, or a page devoted to your profession, you can respond to an employer's query with: "Sure,