Texas Holocaust and Genocide Commission

THE
TEXAS LIBERATOR
Witness to the Holocaust

Introductory panel
Banner Overview

Below is a summary of each of the banners included in this traveling exhibit. The exhibit can be broken into three sections, based on panel type; details are given below.

This is a comprehensive list of all the banners, but our exhibit can be customized to fit your space. If you require a smaller version, please contact Cheyanne Perkins at (512) 463-5674 or cheyanne.perkins@thgc.texas.gov.

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**Intro and Outro**

*Single-sided | 59” X 80”
2 Banners*

**The Texas Liberator: Witness to the Holocaust**

*Intro panel*

**Texas Liberator Honor Roll**

*Lists the THGC’s liberator honor roll*

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**Context**

*Single sided | 33” X 84”
23 Banners*

**Texas Before and Into the War**

*Brief summary of demographics prior to WWII, as well as the involvement of Texans in the war effort.*

**Watching a Troubled World**

*How the Great Depression impacted Americans and their view on the war.*

**The Call to Arms**

*Introduces the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940 and explains why it was passed, along with the impact it had on the military.*
The American Man Becomes G.I. Joe
Looks at how the Great Depression impacted families, and how the draft took men from WPA and CCC projects and placed them in the military.

The Rise of Nazism
Examines Germany at the end of WWII and looks at the rise of Hitler and the Nazi Party, as well as some of their early actions and policies.

Antisemitism
Describes how the non-Jewish population of Germany escalated their actions against the Jewish population and shows how antisemitism gave rise to the Nuremberg Laws.

Path to War
Discussess the policy of appeasement and how it led to the Nazi Blitzkrieg.

Early Concentration Camps and Ghettos
Overview of the beginnings of the camps, Kristallnacht, and the creation of ghettos.

German Labor Camps
Describes how the Nazis used prisoners as a source of slave labor.

War in Europe
Looks at the occupation of France, the Battle of Britain, the German-Soviet Nonaggression Pact, Lebensraum, and the German invasion of Russia.

U.S. Enters the War
Summarizes American attitudes early in the war, and notes that the bombing of Pearl Harbor prompted the United States to enter the war.

Europe First Strategy
Explains that the United States wanted to establish victory in Europe before moving to the Pacific Theater. Mentions D-Day and the Battle of the Bulge.

Final Solution
Looks at some of the methods the Nazis used to murder Jews, including the Einsatzgruppen and gas chambers.

Liberation
Explains that although the Nazis tried to hide what happened, Allied soldiers were still confronted with plenty of evidence of the Holocaust when they arrived at the camps.
The Holocaust: Major Camps
Map of Europe, showing the locations of major camps, ghettos, massacres, and deportation routes.

The Holocaust in Perspective
Brief summary of the consequences of the Holocaust, how the world “Holocaust” came to describe what happened, and what other terms may be more suitable (including “Shoah”).

Wreath-Laying Image (“They’re not going to let this happen again.”)
A background image of a wreath-laying ceremony (“Commemorating the Liberation of Mauthausen, 2017”), along with a quote from J. Ted Hartman (a Texas liberator) about attending commemoration ceremonies.

Impacts of the Holocaust
Looks at how the world changed as a direct result of the Holocaust (includes the 1948 Genocide Convention, medical ethics, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

G.I. Joe Returns Home to Texas
Gives statistics on soldiers from Texas and mentions the difficulty many liberators had in sharing their wartime experiences.

The Texas Liberator Project
Overview of the development of the liberator project by the THGC and Texas Tech University.

About the THGC
Gives a brief history of the founding of the THGC and outlines its mission.

The Texas Liberators: Veteran Narratives from World War II

Acknowledgments
Liberator project acknowledgments
Liberators
Double-sided | 33” X 84”
13-26 Banners*

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>SIDE A</th>
<th>SIDE B</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Texas Liberators (intro to liberator section)</td>
<td>Sigmund Liberman</td>
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<tr>
<td>George H. Wessels</td>
<td>Herbert U. Stern</td>
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<td>J. Ted Hartman</td>
<td>Ben Love</td>
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<td>John Valls</td>
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<td>Ray Buchanan</td>
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<td>Jerry B. Morgan</td>
<td>John “Jack” Ferguson Reynolds</td>
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<td>William E. Danner, Sr.</td>
<td>William A. Womack</td>
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<td>William Dippo</td>
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<td>Chester “Chet” Rohn</td>
<td>Wilson Canafax</td>
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<td>Melvin E. Waters</td>
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<td>Jesse G. Reyes</td>
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*There are 13 double-sided banners, with a duplicate of each (26 banners in total).

Requirements for Display

1. Panels must be securely mounted and will not be leaned against walls or set on tables for display (there are up to 51 panels requiring up to 2,000 square feet).

2. The borrowing institution will display the exhibit in a location with environmental controls, and which protects the exhibit from sunlight, humidity, rain, and other weather conditions.

3. Patrons are welcome to take photos of the exhibit, and to share those photos on social media.

4. Other requirements may apply, as appropriate to individual venues. Please contact Cheyanne Perkins at (512) 463-5674 or cheyanne.perkins@thgc.texas.gov to plan your layout.
Unlike much of Europe, America enjoyed an economic boom, the “Roaring Twenties,” after World War I. But by October 1929, the country succumbed to the economic crash that devastated Europe. Within three years, about 25% of the U.S. population—up to 15 million people—became unemployed, and the country’s industrial factories had to cut production in half.

U.S. ENTERS THE WAR

With the outbreak of hostilities, President Roosevelt chose to informally assist Britain and France by increasing defense manufacturing and building military infrastructure. This gave some relief to the unemployment crisis while sending material to the war effort. Yet most Americans felt safely isolated from World War II and did not wish to get involved.

Context panel example
As the Allies advanced towards and into Germany in late 1944, the Nazis desperately diverted resources away from their own defenses to accelerate the killing of Jews. During the retreat, SS members destroyed some of the evidence of their killing centers. They burned down crematoria and other buildings and forced starving prisoners to trudge long distances in freezing weather. Those who lagged behind on these death marches were shot beside the roads, to be left with the thousands of bodies of those who had already collapsed and died.

By April 1945 Allied troops of the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union had nearly established control over Germany and German-occupied Poland. After personally witnessing the horrors discovered at the Ohrdruf concentration camp, General Dwight D. Eisenhower ordered every nearby unit not fighting on the front lines to also visit the camp. "We are told the American soldier does not know what he is fighting for," Eisenhower reportedly said. "Now, at least, he will know what he is fighting against."

As Allied troops encountered the former camps, they were horrified to discover the remaining evidence of the Holocaust—including mounds of corpses that had been left behind to rot. The liberating soldiers were shocked beyond imagination by what they now witnessed. Depending on the extent of mutilation, many camp survivors would attempt to thank or embrace the soldiers. The memories of those moments would stay with the liberators forever.
The first thing we saw when we got to Dachau was a sign over the entrance which says “Work Will Make You Free—Arbeit Macht Frei.” I looked at the prisoners in their striped garb, so filthy and decimated. One of them moved, and I went over to him and he said, “Bist a Jid?” Are you Jewish? I said, “Ich bin a Yid.” I am Jewish. And then I told him, “Alles geet.”

Alles geet.” I speak a little Yiddish, which is pig-German. And—“Alles geet. Alles geet.” All is good. All is good. And I opened my C-rations and fed him a little soup—made a little soup for him. And I asked him what his name was. He said, “Meine namen ist Herman.” “Ich.” My name is Herman, too. So I had tears in my eyes, and I cry every time I think about it.

This poor guy, he was about forty years old and weighed about fifty pounds, maybe. And he died two hours later in my arms…

I have a confession to make. The first forty years I was married, I didn’t say a word about it. It was too horrible to dredge up my memory. But then in 2001, I wrote my autobiography so my kids would know what their father had gone through. And so I wanted them to know what I thought, where I was, where I’ve been, my situation, so that they would know.

He said, “Meine namen ist Herman. Ich.”

My name is Herman, too.
Exhibit panels in the Capitol building extension (November 2017)
Exhibit panels in the Capitol building extension (November 2017).
Exhibit panels in the Capitol building rotunda (November 2017).