

Dr. Michael Berenbaum

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Michael Berenbaum is a writer, lecturer, and teacher consulting in the conceptual development of museums and the development of historical films. He is director of the Sigi Ziering Institute: Exploring the Ethical and Religious Implications of the Holocaust at the American Jewish University (formerly the University of Judaism) where he is also a Professor of Jewish Studies. In the past he has served as the Weinstein Gold Distinguished Visiting Professor at Chapman University, the Podlich Distinguished Visitor at Claremont-McKenna College, the Ida E. King Distinguished Professor of Holocaust Studies at Richard Stockton College for 1999–2000 and the Strassler Family Distinguished Visiting Professor of

Holocaust Studies at Clark University in 2000.

He was the *Executive Editor* of the Second Edition of the *Encyclopaedia Judaica* that reworked, transformed, improved, broadened and deepened, the now classic 1972 work and consists of 22 volumes, sixteen million words with 25,000 individual contributions to Jewish knowledge. The EJ won the prestigious Dartmouth Medal of the American Library Association for the Outstanding Reference Work of 2006. He also was a contributing editor to the *Encyclopedia of Genocide*.

For the three years, he was President and Chief Executive Officer of the *Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation*. He was the Director of the United States Holocaust Research Institute at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum and the Hymen Goldman Adjunct Professor of Theology at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C.

From 1988–93 he served as Project Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, overseeing its creation. He also served as Director of the Jewish Community Council of Greater Washington, Opinion-Page Editor of the *Washington Jewish Week* and Deputy Director of the President's Commission on the Holocaust where he authored its *Report to the President*. He has previously taught at Wesleyan University, Yale University and has served as a visiting professor at three of the major Washington area universities — George Washington University, The University of Maryland, and American University.

Berenbaum is the author and editor of twenty two books, scores of scholarly articles, and hundreds of journalistic pieces. Of his book, *After Tragedy and Triumph*, Raul Hilberg said, "All those who want to read only one book about the

condition of Jewry in 1990 would do well to choose Michael Berenbaum... In his description of contemporary Jewish thought, he sacrifices neither complexity nor lucidity." Charles Silberman praised *The World Must Know* as "a majestic and profoundly moving history of the Holocaust...It is must reading for anyone who would like to be human in the post-Holocaust world." *The Village Voice* praised *Anatomy of the Auschwitz Death Camp* with, "The scholarship, broad and deep, makes this the definitive book on one of our century's defining horrors."

His most recent books include: *Remembering for the Future: Auschwitz, Armenia and Beyond*, *Auschwitz and Not Your Father's Antisemitism*, *A Promise to Remember: The Holocaust in the Words and Voices of Its Survivors* and *After the Passion Has Passed: American Religious Consequences*, a collection of essays on Jews, Judaism and Christianity, Religious Tolerance and Pluralism occasioned by the controversy that swirled around Mel Gibson's film, *The Passion*. Johns Hopkins University Press published a second edition of *The World Must Know*. He is also the editor of *Murder Most Merciful: Essays on the Moral Conundrum Occasioned by Sigi Ziering The Trial of Herbert Bierhoff*. His works have been translated into several languages including Spanish, Hebrew, Japanese and Ukrainian.

Among his other works are *A Mosaic of Victims: Non-Jews Persecuted and Murdered by the Nazis*, *The Vision of the Void: Theological Reflections on the Works of Elie Wiesel*, and *Witness to the Holocaust: An Illustrated Documentary History of the Holocaust in the Words of Its Victims, Perpetrators, and Bystanders*. He was co-editor on several works, including *The Holocaust: Religious and Philosophical Implications* (with John Roth), *The Holocaust and History: The Known, the Unknown, the Disputed and the Reexamined* (with Abraham Peck), and most recently, *The Bombing of Auschwitz: Should the Allies Have Attempted It?* (with Michael Neufeld). He is the author of *A Promise to Remember* co-editor of *Martyrdom: The History of an Idea*.

In film, his work as Co-Producer of *One Survivor Remembers: The Gerda Weissman Klein Story* was recognized with an Academy Award, an Emmy Award and the Cable Ace Award. In December 2012 it was named by the Library of Congress to the National Film Registry as a work of enduring importance to American culture. He was the historical consultant on The Shoah Foundation's Documentary, *The Last Days* that won an Academy Award for the best feature-length documentary of 1998.

Over the past several years, Berenbaum was a historical consultant or chief historical consultant for literally dozens of documentaries and films. Among them are::

- HBO's *Conspiracy*, recently nominated for 10 Emmy awards,
- NBC's *Uprising*
- The History Channel's *The Holocaust: The Untold Story*, which won the CINE Golden Eagle Award and a Silver Medal at the US International Film and Video Festival.
- *About Face*, a film on German Jewish refugees who fought for the Allies During World War II.
- *Swimming in Auschwitz*, the story of six women survivors of Auschwitz that was broadcast on PBS.
- *After Auschwitz: Six Women's Stories*, recounting their post Holocaust life in Los Angeles.
- *Treblinka's Last Witness*, the story of Samuel Willenberg, broadcast nationally on PBS.
- *The Zookeeper's Wife*
- *The Finale*
- *A Call to Remember: The David Schaefer Story*, which won a regional Emmy in 2018.
- BBC's *1944: Should the Allies Have Bombed Auschwitz?*

He was the executive producer, writer, and historian for a film entitled *Desperate Hours* on the Holocaust in Turkey, which was broadcast on Public Television in the fall and is a consultant and interviewee on several broadcasts, most recently, *Imaginary Witness: Hollywood and the Holocaust*, which was broadcast on the BBC in England and on AMC in the United States. He also was the commentator for the National Geographic's *Master's of Death* and *Scrapbook from Hell* two documentaries, the first on the Einsatzgruppen, the Mobile Killing Units, and the second on the Auschwitz album of the perpetrators.

Berenbaum was the conceptual developer on the Illinois Holocaust Museum and Educational Center that opened in Skokie, and played a similar function as conceptual developer and chief curator of the Belzec Memorial at the site of the Death Camp. He was the conceptual developer on the Memoria y Tolerancia in Mexico City and a historian to the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia. He is currently at work on the Memorial Museum to Macedonia Jewry in Skopje and the Dallas Holocaust and Human Rights Museum as well as Museum's in Cincinnati and Brooklyn. He was a curator of the Special Exhibition on *Auschwitz: Not So Far Away, Not So Long Ago*, which opened in Madrid Spain in November 2017 and in New York in January 2019, and will travel for the next seven years.

He is a partner in Berenbaum Jacobs Associates, working with Edward Jacobs on the conceptual development and the design of Museums. BJA projects include work in Cincinnati, Dallas and Skopje, Northern Macedonia.

For his work in journalism, he won the Simon Rockower Memorial Award of the American Jewish Press Association three times in three different categories during a two-year period. He has been featured on *Nightline* and the *Today Show* as well as *National Public Television*, *PBS*, *CNN* and *Fox News*.

Berenbaum takes special pleasure in his work as a teacher. His course at Georgetown was named by the student newspaper as one of the ten most important courses in the University. Among his former students was the famed American entertainer, Pearl Bailey, who wrote of Berenbaum: "The wisdom I gained from his class is priceless. He is [was] young, aggressive, tough, wise as some sages of yore, and as brilliant as a diamond. When class ended, you felt filled, drained, and filled again." (Pearl Bailey, *Between You and Me*)

Berenbaum is a graduate of Queens College (BA, 1967) and Florida State University (Ph.D., 1975), and also attended The Hebrew University, the Jewish Theological Seminary and Boston University. He has won numerous fellowships including the Danforth Fellowship, the George Wise Fellowship at Tel Aviv University, and the Charles E. Merrill Fellowship at FSU. Berenbaum was an elected fellow of the *Society for Values in Higher Education*. He was given a Doctor of Divinity (*honoris causa*) from Nazareth College in 1995 and a Doctor of Humane Letters (*honoris causa*) from Denison University in 2000 and a Doctor of Humane Letter (*honoris causa*) from Gratz College in 2011 and the College of Idaho (2014).

He is married to Melissa Patack Berenbaum, who is the Vice-President and General Manager of the Motion Picture Association of America, California Group. He is the father of four children: Ilana, a Brown University honors graduate, who was ordained as a Rabbi by the University of Judaism in May 2001 and is Executive Director of the Southern California Board of Rabbis; Lev, who graduated from Georgetown University and is a Los Angeles-based businessman; Joshua, born in December 1998; and Mira, born in May, 2000.

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