

USC Shoah Foundation

The Institute for Visual History and Education

Changing the world through testimony.

About

USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust and other genocides a compelling voice for education and action.

The Institute currently has over 53,000 testimonies, each one a unique source of insight and knowledge that offer powerful stories from history that demand to be explored and shared. In this way, we will be able to see the faces and hear the voices of those who witnessed history, allowing them to teach and inspire action against intolerance.

The testimonies will be preserved in the Visual History Archive, one of the largest digital collections of its kind in the world. Currently encompassing 107,000 hours of video testimony, the Visual History Archive is an invaluable resource for humanity, with nearly every testimony containing a complete personal history of life before, during and after the interviewee's firsthand experience with genocide. The Visual History Archive is digitized, fully searchable and hyperlinked to the minute. This indexing allows students, professors, researchers and others around the world to retrieve entire testimonies or search for specific sections within testimonies through a set of more than 62,000 keywords and key phrases, 1.3 million names, and 628,000 images.

The Visual History Archive is expanding its collection to include testimony from survivors and witnesses of other genocides, including the Rwandan Tutsi Genocide and the Nanjing Massacre. Sixty-four Rwandan testimonies were added in the spring of 2013, and 12 testimonies from survivors of the Nanjing Massacre were added in the spring of 2014. The Institute is currently indexing nearly 400 testimonies from the Armenian Genocide, so they can begin to be integrated into the Visual History Archive by the event's April 24, 2015, centennial. Each testimony collection adds context for the other, providing multiple pathways for students, educators and scholars to learn from the eyewitnesses of history across time, locations, cultures and social-political circumstances.

Leveraging the world-class faculty and scholarly resources of its home at the University of Southern California, within the Dana and David Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences, and with the vital support of the philanthropic community, the Institute strives to understand and share the insights contained within the Visual History Archive through three strategic priorities: Research, Education, and Access.

Key Facts

- ✓ Interviews for 53,583 audio-visual testimonies were conducted in 61 countries and in 39 languages.
- ✓ The Institute is commemorating its 20th Anniversary in 2014. Steven Spielberg founded the Institute in 1994 to videotape and preserve interviews with survivors and other witnesses of the Holocaust.
- ✓ The Institute was awarded 11 patents on digital collection management technologies it developed.
- ✓ The Shoah Foundation moved to its permanent home at the University of Southern California in January 2006.
- ✓ Testimonies average over two hours in length, including personal history before, during, and after firsthand experience with genocide.
- ✓ More than 107,000 hours of video testimony have been integrated into the Visual History Archive, with all content indexed and searchable to the minute.
- ✓ The Visual History Archive now includes testimony from survivors and witnesses of the 1994 Rwandan Tutsi Genocide and the 1937 Nanjing Massacre. Testimonies from the Armenian Genocide will begin being added in April 2015, in conjunction with its 100 Anniversary.
- ✓ Currently the USC Shoah Foundation employs 60 people worldwide.
- ✓ Dr. Stephen D. Smith serves as Executive Director of USC Shoah Foundation – The Institute for Visual History and Education.

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RESEARCH: Developing Content with Consequence

The Institute aspires to be the world's academic authority on the study of genocide and personal testimony. It continues to incorporate new collections of genocide eyewitness testimonies while simultaneously fostering scholarly activities that confront real-world problems the testimonies address. Scholars in many fields have utilized the vast resources of the Visual History Archive to teach more than 440 university courses across four continents, including 112 courses at USC. Researchers and thought leaders have utilized the testimonies in more than 125 scholarly works and the archive has been central to dozens of conferences across a range of disciplines.

In April 2014, the Institute announced the Center for Advanced Genocide Research that will serve as the research and scholarship unit of the Institute. The Center will bring scholars from around the world to study how and why instances of mass violence occur, and how to intervene in the cycle that can lead to them.

- ✓ Each year, the Institute invites a renowned international thought leader to serve as Scholar-in-Residence.
- ✓ The Center will award up to 10 fellows every year.
- ✓ Institute fellows, staff and student interns participate in more than a dozen academic events on the USC campus annually.
- ✓ The Institute, in conjunction with the Center for Advanced Genocide Research, will host an international conference in November 2014 at USC titled "Memory, Media and Technology: Exploring the Trajectories of Schindler's List," examining the trajectories of memory, media and technology throughout a range of disciplines and from a variety of vantage points and venues.

EDUCATION: Teaching the World through Testimony

Using testimony from the Visual History Archive, the Institute develops teaching tools for educators across the disciplinary spectrum, such as history, civics, English and other language arts. The Institute also provides professional development to prepare educators worldwide to use testimony in relevant and engaging ways—providing an experience that takes students beyond the textbook.

IWitness, the Institute's flagship educational website for teachers and their students, was recognized as one of the "Best Websites for Teaching and Learning" by the American Association of School Librarians in 2012. The website provides students access to 1,300 testimonies for guided exploration. Students can engage with the testimonies and bring them into their own multimedia projects via a built-in video editor. By combining testimonies with interactive and content-rich activities, IWitness promotes deeper understanding of 20th-century history and development of 21st century digital-literacy skills to inspire responsible participation in civil society.

- ✓ Approximately 21,00 high school students and over 5,000 educators in 58 countries and all 50 U.S. states have used IWitness.
- ✓ The Institute has trained more than 39,000 educators around the world to incorporate testimony into classroom lessons.
- ✓ More than 200 educators have participated in advanced training and the Teaching with Testimony in the 21st Century programs in the U.S., Ukraine, Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland.

GLOBAL ACCESS: Sharing the Testimonies

Testimony is reaching a broad international audience through the Institute's Visual History Archive, as well as IWitness, its YouTube channel, and its Web portals in 12 languages. The complete Visual History Archive is available at 50 institutions around the world, while smaller collections are available at over 200 sites in 34 countries. The Institute will continue to develop digital technologies to preserve and enhance the Visual History Archive, while building access pathways for a broad audience of students, educators, scholars and the general public.

- ✓ Approximately 3.4 million students, researchers, teachers and laypersons view the testimonies every year.
- ✓ The Visual History Archive Online (vhaonline.usc.edu) features more than 1,200 testimonies accessible worldwide.