

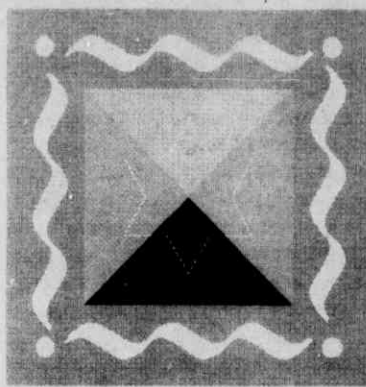
# The Nizkor Project and the Fight Against Holocaust Denial

By John A. Drobnicki

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 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 has spent the past several years attempting to place revisionist ads in college newspa-



pers. 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 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*, after the Hebrew word for "we will remember." One of those who has worked closely with McVay is Jamie McCarthy, 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, 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 about Adolf Hitler. Slowly but surely, the entire collection of published Nuremberg documents 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. The Archive also contains relevant postings from revisionism. Of course, USENET postings can also be retrieved through DejaNews.

The contents of the FTP Archive are being converted into HTML format by a team of volunteers known as the HWEB. 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 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: 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." The current FAQ, which has not yet been fully completed, is entitled "Deceit & Misrepresentation: The Techniques of Holocaust 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, the Institute for Historical Review, and the Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust.

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

You can find *Nizkor* on the World Wide Web at [www.nizkor.org](http://www.nizkor.org).

*John A. Drobnicki is currently Assistant Professor/Reference Librarian at York College of The City University of New York. He has been a contributor to Nizkor since the Summer of 1994. This article was first printed on "The Internet Homesteader," published by the State University of New York, and is reprinted with their permission.*



## Nizkor Site Creator, Ken McVay

Ken McVay is a 58-year-old Canadian — a leader in developing and implementing community-based, grass roots strategies for countering the lies of those promoting hatred on the Internet.

The work McVay's been doing, now known as *The Nizkor Project* has consumed nearly seven years of his life.

He was compelled to counter the deceit of Holocaust deniers and hate mongers after running across virulently anti-Semitic material on the Internet in January of 1992. It had been posted by Dan Gannon from Portland, Oregon, and included malignant doses of Nazi propaganda. Offended at the nature of this material, McVay began making trips to the local library in search of Holocaust information, and borrowing books on the subject.

He began what has now become his life's work, rereading many of the three hundred books about World War II that he had read as a teenager and reading for the first time countless additional books specifically about the Holocaust. He transcribed relevant information into his computer and then used this documentation to refute the specific claims made by Mr. Gannon.

McVay often spent 18 to 20 hours a day typing, and soon found that he had somehow amassed over 3,500 pages of information. As the flood of information increased, so did demands for the information; requests inundated McVay's electronic mailbox, and he soon found himself a defacto, full-time Holocaust researcher and librarian to the world of the Internet.

Today he is building one of the most extensive and thorough information sources about the Holocaust and the activities of racists and white supremacists in the world. McVay devotes countless hours to the maintenance and improvement of this massive collection, which now exceeds one million pages.

The *Nizkor* sites have proven themselves invaluable tools for Holocaust researchers, the media, students, and those concerned with the alarming rise of neo-Nazi activity on the Internet.

In recognition of the value of McVay's work to the people and province, he was awarded the Order of British Columbia in 1995 — the highest honor the Provincial government can bestow upon a citizen, and a special Media Human Rights Award, presented by B'nai Brith Canada in March of 1996.

Ken is a popular speaker, and travels extensively throughout North America, conducting workshops and seminars dealing with Holocaust denial and hate speech on the Internet. \*



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## TEREZIN

By Max Spitzer

(Editor's Note: Max Spitzer, a junior at UNC-Chapel Hill, visited the Czech Republic with his family a few years ago. His visit to Terezin, from which his grandfather survived, inspired this poem, which was first published in "The White and the Blue" in Spring 1998.)

I'm staring at the dusty ground, my hand  
Clutched around my father's, as we walk  
Behind the group of people. The ground is sand-

It fixes my attention. The tour-guide talks,  
"Arbeit macht frei" means "Work will set you free"  
But I don't hear. The tourists simply gawk

And murmur at the tall smoke-stacks they see  
That took the burning fuel from the slaughter  
And sprinkled ash around the ground. We leave,

Our shuffling feet move slow - the day's gotten hotter.  
I notice now my father's other hand,  
The one that should be holding his father's,

Is covered in that dust, that ancient sand. We walk  
on through the exit, holding hands.