

US Holocaust Museum exhibit of gay persecution by Nazis

The US Holocaust Museum's new exhibit covers 1933-1945

WASHINGTON, DC — Thousands of homosexuals, primarily gay men, were murdered in concentration camps by the Nazis along with millions of Jews and other victims including, Roma (Gypsies), Poles, Soviet prisoners of war, Jehovah's Witnesses and the handicapped during World War II and the Holocaust.

The story of what happened to homosexuals in Nazi Germany is the subject of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's new exhibition, Nazi Persecution of Homosexuals 1933-1945.

"This exhibition reflects the Museum's commitment to recognizing all the victims of Nazism," says Fred S. Zeidman, Chairman of the United States Holocaust Memorial Council, the Museum's governing body.

In 1933, the year Adolf Hitler assumed power, an estimated one million homosexual men lived in Germany. Nazi policy asserted that homosexual men carried a "degeneracy" that threatened the "disciplined masculinity" of Germany. Additionally, the Nazis charged that homosexuals' failure to father children was a factor in Germany's declining birth rate, thus robbing the nation of future sons and



Collage on the closing of gay and lesbian bars in Berlin from Vienna newspaper *Der natschrei* (*The Cry for Help*), March 4, 1933. Schwules Museum, Berlin.

daughters who could fight for and work toward a greater Reich.

Exhibition curator, Edward Phillips said, "The Nazis believed it was possible to 'cure' homosexual behavior through labor and 're-education.' As their efforts to eradicate homosexuality grew more draconian, gay men became subject to castration, institutionalization, and deportation to concentration camps."

Between 1933 and 1945, an estimated 100,000 men were arrested for homosexuality, and of these, approximately 50,000 were sentenced to the crime. Most of these men spent time in regular prisons. An estimated 5000 — 15,000 were sent to concentration camps where an unknown number of them perished.

The exhibition will run through Sunday, March 16, 2003 — after which it will circulate to cities across the country. More than two years in development, it is the first major exhibition on the subject for English-speaking audiences and draws on materials from more than 40 archives and other repositories in eight countries.

info:
Exhibit now through March 16, 2003
www.usholocaustmuseum.org

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