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# A Canadian Holocaust: Remembering the Shoah

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By Philip Carl Salzman

Think about it. What would the death of six million people look like in the Canadian population?

A loss of that number would be equivalent to the annihilation of every single person in the following cities: Vancouver, Calgary, Saskatoon, Winnipeg, London, and Halifax. Or, the death of every person in British Columbia and Manitoba. For Canadians, such numbers are impossible to imagine.

Equally hard and painful to imagine is the cruelty of murdering six million people, referring only to Jews and not to all people who suffered the same fate. There were two main ways the Germans and their helpers murdered six million Jewish citizens of Germany, France, the Baltics, Poland, Hungary, and Greece, among others: round up men and women, boys and girls, infants, and elderly, take them to the countryside, force them to strip naked, and shoot them with machine guns; or, transport them to camps, where they were confined in buildings and murdered with poison gas.

In 2018, April 11<sup>th</sup> is Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom Hashoah) in Israel, which is also observed in Canada. The date corresponds with the 27<sup>th</sup> day of the month of Nisan in the Jewish calendar. The International Holocaust Remembrance Day is January 27<sup>th</sup>, selected to honour the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp.

How can we understand this almost unthinkable event that many people see as the epitome of evil?

A major part of the evil was the racial theory that divided people into races, and evaluated them according to the quality of their race. Germans held the German race to be pure and noble. In contrast, Germans saw the Jews as an inferior race, polluting the German race and polluting Germany and other countries. After the catastrophes of their defeat in WWI and the Great Depression, Germans looked for someone to blame besides themselves, and the Jews served as their scapegoats. No doubt, it helped that many Jews were prosperous, and the prospect of Germans appropriating Jewish homes, stores, and factories must have seemed a pleasant compensation for the hardships Germans had suffered.

For fifty years after the Holocaust, racial theory was rejected as false and immoral. Physical and biological anthropologists refuted the idea of human races as unscientific. All living humans belong to the same species, as shown by the fact that any two fertile humans can produce fertile offspring. Furthermore, all characteristics mistakenly labelled "racial," such as hair type, skin colour, head shape, etc., vary independently, and appear as gradual clines from one population to the next. Studies of "race" were replaced by population genetics.

But what was old and outmoded is now new and compelling again. In the last few decades, race theory has become popular again. Once more we are reducing individuals to their racial categories and treating them according to their race. These days, we do not talk about "purity" and "pollution," but about "oppressor" races and "oppressed" races. And we talk about the need to raise the oppressed races and marginalize the oppressor races.

Blacks, people of colour, Indigenous First Nations, and Muslims (although Muslims are a religion and not a race) are alleged to be oppressed by whites and Christians and Jews (although these latter two are not races either). In this new race theory, genders are treated as honorary races, with men oppressing women, with the usual reversal required. "Racism" has been redefined to mean oppression of a race, not just thinking of and treating people according to their race. This is a neat twist, because it means that Blacks, people of colour, Indigenous First Nations, and Muslims can never be racist! They can only suffer from the racism of others.

"Social justice," an idea borrowed from communist equality theory, requires that each "race" be equal in education, jobs, wealth, and government positions. In short, there must be equality of results for each "racial" category. Individuals should not be judged, at least according to this theory, by their achievements or character or potential; "colour-blind" merit does not merit consideration. Rather, people must be judged by their "race." According to "social justice" theory, this is not racism; it is justice.

It is unfortunate that “social justice” ideology has been adopted by the Canadian government and by Canadian educational institutions, the latter shaping the minds of future generations of citizens. According to this ideology, if justice is denied to individuals because they are white or Christians or Jews or men, well, they are all oppressors, and deserve what they get.

Of course, we have no reason to worry about losing Vancouver or Manitoba, or about seeing large numbers of Canadians machine-gunned or gassed. Today’s anti-white, anti-male, and anti-Christian campaigns are on behalf of, aside from women, relatively small minorities in the country. There is no chance that these minorities will fully take control of the state, or that any campaign to exterminate the majority would attract anyone other than the most extreme fringe activists.

There will be no holocaust in Canada.

But our renewed enthusiasm for racism, for thinking of people, and allocating and denying benefits on the basis of race, undermines the integrity and the autonomy of individuals by reducing them to being members of abstract categories.

In place of individual autonomy, “social justice” offers social engineering at the hands of the state and educational officials. However well meaning, “social justice” ideology replaces universal standards with double standards, rejects merit as a measure of individual’s characteristics, and dismisses individuality, freedom, efficiency, and creativity, all on behalf of equality of results for racial categories.

This new “good” racism poisons social relations and destroys even a pretense of community solidarity and commonality of citizenship. “Social justice” brings benefits to some at the expense of injustice to others. It is an offence against human rights, which always pertain to individuals and not “races,” and it will not benefit Canadian society.

Haven’t we learned from the Holocaust that racism is a malicious and destructive ideology? The new “racism” will only harm Canada.

## About the Author



**Philip Carl Salzman** B.A. (Antioch), M.A., Ph.D. (Chicago) is Professor of Anthropology at McGill University, appointed in 1968. He founded the Commission on Nomadic Peoples of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, and its international journal, *Nomadic Peoples*, for which he received the IUAES Gold Award. In recent years he has also served as Senior Fellow at the University of St. Andrews, Open Society International Scholar at the American University of Central Asia, Erasmus Mundus International Fellow at the University of Catania, and Visiting Professor at the University of Sydney. Extensive ethnographic field research in Baluchistan (Iran), Gujarat and Rajasthan (India), and Sardinia (Italy) provided the foundation many articles in academic journals, and for book publications such as *The Anthropology of Real Life: Events in Human Experience* (1999), *Black Tents of Baluchistan* (2000), winner of the Premio Pitrù–Salomone Marino, *Understanding Culture: An Introduction of Anthropological Theory* (2001), *Pastoralists: Equality, Hierarchy, and the State* (2004), *Culture and Conflict in the Middle East* (2008), *Postcolonial Theory and the Arab-Israel Conflict* (2008), and *Thinking Anthropologically 3<sup>rd</sup> Ed.* (2010). His latest book publication is *Classic Comparative Anthropology: Studies from the Tradition* (2012). In public affairs, he was a member of Middle East Strategy at Harvard (2008-2010), a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (2004-2012), and is currently a Senior Fellow at the Frontier Centre for Public Policy, a member of the Academic Council of the Canadian Institute for Jewish Studies, a Fellow of the Middle East Forum (2015-), and a member of the Board of Directors of Scholars for Peace in the Middle East (2016-). His articles have been published by the Frontier Centre, the Middle East Forum, the Gatestone Institute, the Canadian Institute for Jewish Research, the Macdonald Laurier Institute, and *Areo Magazine*.