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## Upcoming Events

St. Charles Center for Faith In Action Heart of Reconciliation Conference  
November 17th-20th  
7100 St. Charles Avenue  
New Orleans, LA 70115  
This powerful gathering will bring together community members, those touched by the criminal legal system, trauma-informed experts, spiritual leaders, and change agents to deepen the understanding of the power of reconciliation, identify tools for reconciliation, and build action plans to heal.

[Register here.](#)



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## What Anne Frank's Diary Can Teach Us Today

By Naomi Yavneh Klos, Ph.D.

When I tell people that I am writing a book about Anne Frank, the response is often quite enthusiastic: "I love Anne Frank!" But, although Anne Frank is an iconic figure for Jews and non-Jews alike, many do not know the nuances of her story or its context in the Dutch experience of World War II. For example, although Anne spoke fluent Dutch and, indeed, wrote her diary in Dutch, she was not a Dutch citizen but rather a refugee from Germany. Her family -- like so many others -- was denied permission to emigrate to the United States because of America's persistent fear of refugees. Even a letter (and financial support) from Otto Frank's [American friend, Nathan Straus](#), a high ranking member of the Roosevelt administration, failed to secure visas for Anne's stateless Jewish family.

"Tell the human story" is an intuitive and essential component in Holocaust pedagogy. In seeking to address today's challenges of racism and hate, the Loyola Anne Frank Project trains [middle school students](#) here in New Orleans to be peer docents for the Anne Frank House's traveling exhibit, "Anne Frank: A History for Today," because children (like grown-ups) connect to a story, not to statistics.

And, as the late Superior General Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J., reminded us in a speech on the commitment to justice in Jesuit education, to educate "the whole person for solidarity with the real world," learning must come not through "concepts" but "contacts":

"When the heart is touched by direct experience," Kolvenbach affirmed, "the mind may be challenged to change." He continued, "Students in the course of their formation must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively."

This connection to another, letting the gritty reality of their world into our lives, is essential in teaching "through" rather than "about" a topic such as the Holocaust. We are drawn to help those we know, and many feel they know Anne, whose intimate self-portrait speaks across generations and continents, from a high school class for underachievers in California (whose book, *The Freedom Writers Diary*, became a Hollywood film) to an imprisoned human rights activist in South Africa (Nelson Mandela) to Kristen, a 6th-grader in New Orleans, who reflected, "Anne's yellow star is like my black skin."

And yet, if our students are to "think critically and act justly," we cannot end with Anne's exceptionality. Rather, we must view her story as an invitation to compassionate action. Yes, Anne was an amazing teenage girl trapped in extraordinary circumstances -- extraordinary not because no other little girls were in hiding but because, in fact, *so many people were hiding for their lives*. At a time when Jewish people were being dehumanized, demonized, and destroyed, she kept a diary that is insightful and witty and a powerful witness that each of the 1.5 million murdered Jewish children was a unique individual, created, as my tradition teaches, in the image and likeness of the divine.

Since I began writing my book on Anne Frank in the spring of 2020, the number of refugees (from places as disparate as Afghanistan, Central America, Africa, and Ukraine) has only increased. According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), one in 95 people on earth have fled their homes. There are currently 26.4 million refugees in the world, at least half of whom are under age 18. What do these children have in common with Anne Frank? Anne was an innocent girl caught up in a terrible war. Let us not forget that there are others like her in desperate need of help. Anne's story is a reminder, a call, to work toward justice and peace. She asks us, not, what would I have done, but what will I do?

**Naomi Yavneh Klos, Ph.D., is the Reverend Emmett M. Bienvenu, S.J., Distinguished Chair in Humanities, and Professor and Co-Chair of Languages and Cultures.**

Monthly articles reflect the opinions of the authors and not necessarily those of Loyola University New Orleans.  
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