

The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous

**80 Main Street
West Orange, NJ 07052
973-736-1800
www.jfr.org**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Joshua Steinreich
Steinreich Communications
(212) 491-1600
jsteinreich@scompr.com

24 HOLOCAUST EDUCATORS FROM NINE U.S. STATES & POLAND RECEIVE COVETED LERNER FELLOWSHIPS

THE JEWISH FOUNDATION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS PROVIDES EDUCATORS WITH INSTRUCTION ON TEACHING HOLOCAUST EDUCATION TO THEIR STUDENTS

ELIZABETH, New Jersey – The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous (JFR) selected 24 middle and high school teachers and Holocaust center staff from nine states and Poland as 2026 Alfred Lerner Fellows. The group participated in the JFR’s Summer Institute for Teachers, an intensive five-day course that delved into the complex history of the Holocaust and discussed new teaching techniques for introducing the subject in their classrooms.

The conference took place at the Hilton Newark Airport from June 20 through June 24 and opened with a lecture on the history of anti-Judaism and antisemitism. It concluded with a lecture on contemporary antisemitism.

The program is a high-level, intensive academic seminar in which participants were exposed to noted Holocaust scholars, including Avinoam Patt of New York University; Benjamin Carter Hett of Hunter College and the CUNY Graduate Center; Edward B. Westermann of Texas A&M University; John Q. Barrett of St. John's University; Lawrence R. Douglas of Amherst College; renowned Holocaust historian and exhibition curator Paul Salmons from the United Kingdom; Rebecca Erbelding of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; Richards Plavnieks of Florida Southern College; Robert Jan van Pelt of the University of Waterloo; Sheryl Silver Ochayon of Yad Vashem; Steven Field of New York University’s Grossman School of Medicine and American Jewish Committee U.S. Director for Combatting Antisemitism Holly Huffnagle.

2026 JFR SUMMER INSTITUTE
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The seminar is designed to allow participants to meet in small groups after each lecture, address the specific aspect of the Holocaust presented, share teaching concepts and develop approaches for introducing the subject matter to their students.

Teachers selected for the program must be English or social studies teachers at the middle or high school level, have taught for at least five years, be at least five years from retirement and currently teach the Holocaust in their classroom.

“The three primary goals for the JFR’s Summer Institute are to provide teachers with a graduate-level course on Antisemitism and the Holocaust; to empower educators to develop pedagogical connections with other teachers; and to equip these teachers with additional resources to bring back to their classrooms,” said JFR Executive Vice President Stanlee Stahl.

The 2026 Lerner Fellows are:

- Monique Tait from Bookert T. Washington K-8 School in Birmingham, AL
- Jessica Moulton from Dothan High School in Dothan, AL
- Shawndra Wilson from Palm Beach County School District in West Palm Beach, FL
- Roneet Edrich from inSIGHT Through Education in Palm Beach Gardens, FL
- Ilyssa Greene from Santaluces Community High School in Lantana, FL
- Charles Lankford from Tocoí Creek High School in Saint Augustine, FL
- Dawn Wiley from Beaubien Elementary in Chicago, IL
- Karen Bidus from Trinity Luthern School in Tinley Park, IL
- Samantha Sherley from Truman Middle School in St. Joseph, MO
- Helen Turner from St. Louis Kaplan Feldman Holocaust Museum in St. Louis, MO
- Michaela Lubeski from Robert L. Horbelt Intermediate School in Barnegat, NJ
- Jill Spain from Russell O. Brackman Middle School in Barnegat, NJ
- Carol Burtnick from Cedar Drive Middle School in Colts Neck, NJ
- Kathleen Godlesky from Cedar Drive Middle School in Colts Neck, NJ
- Gabrielle O'Connor from Linden High School in Linden, NJ
- Dayna Hagewood from John Adams Middle School in Edison, NJ
- Zachary Graulich from Holocaust Memorial & Tolerance Center of Nassau County in Glen Cove, NY
- Melissa Survinski from Hampton Middle School in Allison Park, PA

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- Daniel Singleton from Holocaust Center of Pittsburgh in Pittsburgh, PA
- Reese Stanton from Dreher High School in Columbia, SC
- Marla Palmer from St. Joseph's Catholic School in Greenville, SC
- MaryBeth Nicol from Thompson Intermediate School in Houston, TX
- Adriana Castro from Holocaust Museum Houston in Houston, TX
- Agnieszka Kus from POLIN in Warsaw, Poland

The nationally acclaimed Fellowship program is named in memory of Alfred Lerner, the founding chairman and chief executive officer of MBNA Corporation, who died in October 2002. Lerner was a long-time advisor and supporter of JFR programs and activities. His deep commitment to the JFR's work and his special interest in Holocaust education led to the seminar being endowed in his name.

The JFR continues its work of providing monthly financial assistance to aged and needy Righteous Gentiles living in 10 countries. Since its founding, the JFR has provided more than \$46.5 million to aged and needy rescuers. Its Holocaust teacher education program has become a standard for teaching the history of the Holocaust and educating teachers and students about the significance of the Righteous as moral and ethical exemplars. For more information, visit <https://www.jfr.org/>.