

TIMELINE

- 1914 –1918** World War I. The Netherlands is neutral.
- 1919–1933** Europe struggles to rebuild after World War I. The Netherlands suffers from the Great Depression as do many other countries.
- 1933** Adolf Hitler becomes chancellor of Germany in January and the Nazis come to power. By 1934, they have consolidated their power through the elimination of all other political parties. Hitler merges the offices of president and chancellor, becoming dictator of the German Reich.
- 1934 –1939** Increasingly harsh anti-Semitic laws in Germany and its dominions result in many Jews emigrating to neutral countries. At least 35,000 German Jews go to the Netherlands. Germany takes over Czechoslovakia and Austria before the Second World War begins in September 1939.
- 1938** Kristallnacht (The Night of Broken Glass), November 9th/10th, orchestrated by the German government in Germany, Austria, and areas of German occupied Czechoslovakia – a violent anti-Jewish pogrom that signals the intensification of the Nazi anti-Semitic agenda.
- 1939** Germany invades Poland, marking the beginning of World War II.
- 1940** German Army invades the Netherlands on May 10th and occupies Amsterdam on May 16th. About 75,000 Jews are living in Amsterdam at the time.
- 1941–1945** Arrests and deportation of Jews in the Netherlands to concentration camps. At least 80 percent of Jews living in the Netherlands perished.
- 1945** Canadian Army liberates Amsterdam on May 4th. Germany surrenders on May 7th. Hostilities cease on all fronts and WWII ends in Europe on May 8th. WWII officially ends everywhere in August of 1945 after the bombing of Japan.

Our heartfelt appreciation and deep thanks to teachers Margarita Rhodes, Rabbi Batshir Torchio and Professor Marion Deshmukh, whose contributions made this brochure possible



Judith Trijtel, Amsterdam, 1943, by Annemie Wolff
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LOST STORIES FOUND IMAGES

PORTRAITS OF JEWS IN WARTIME AMSTERDAM BY ANNEMIE WOLFF

February 26 - April 17, 2015

A Project of the San Francisco-based
Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund
in collaboration with
The Goethe Institut, San Francisco
and
The Wolff Foundation, Amsterdam



A DIFFERENT LENS

These images may be markedly different from those you have seen before. So often images from the Holocaust are of barely living, skeletal human beings draped in striped uniforms peering blankly from behind barbed wire fences. Those prevalent depictions can be so incomprehensibly horrific that they become inaccessible. One goal of this photo exhibit is to create the opposite experience. Our hope is that the men, women, and children found here are as familiar to viewers as are their own families, teachers, neighbors, and friends. In other words, you see yourself and your world in them.

It is important to note that of those who survived, each had his or her own experience of life after the war, some choosing never to speak about it again, others using their personal stories as an opportunity to teach others.

We hope that by drawing attention to Annemie Wolff's unique courage you may find your own way to be advocates for greater compassion and dialogue, justice and equality in this world.

A BRIEF HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

The anti-Semitism that rose out of Germany and spread throughout Europe had a long and complicated history. One significant factor had to do with penalties imposed upon Germany as outlined in the Versailles Treaty of 1919. The Versailles Treaty "blamed" Germany for starting World War I, and heavy war reparations were imposed, which led to to hyperinflation, and political and social unrest between 1919 and 1924. With the crash of the stock market on Wall Street in 1929, economic and political instability created a precipitous rise of extreme political parties on the far left (Communists) and the far right (Nazis). Savvy political leaders took advantage of this turmoil through the use of propaganda that blamed the Jewish people for the economic hardships being experienced in Germany.

The Nazis were successful in uniting people in support of the growing right-wing party. While the Nazis primarily targeted Jews, other groups also suffered discrimination and death: Sinti and Roma (Gypsies), homosexuals, as well as the mentally and physically challenged.

Part of the Nazi agenda was to eliminate the entire Jewish people. This began with the registration of every Jew, then forcible relocation into ghettos, and ultimately deportation to labor or death camps. Contact between the Jewish and non-Jewish populations was severely restricted. To question or complain led to harassment, then arrest, and then deportation to labor camps. There was no way to safely question the practices of the Nazi Party and those who supported it.

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Annemie Wolff knew some of the people she photographed, but most were simply clients who sought her professional services. Why did she risk arrest, possible deportation to labor camp, and perhaps even death to photograph these people?
2. If you didn't know that these portraits were taken during a time of terrible oppression, could you find clues in the expressions, clothes, or backgrounds that might lead you to that conclusion? Make a list of as many of these clues as you can find. Choose one photograph and write the name of the person in the portrait and describe their expression.
3. The photos in the exhibit represent many different people attempting to go about their lives as best they could under Nazi occupation. In the biographies accompanying the photos you'll find information about the professions represented by the subjects in this show. List as many as you can find.
4. Imagine your life under enemy occupation. Would the adults you know attempt to continue their professions, even if it was against the law? Pick one adult you know and write a paragraph about the challenges they might face attempting to engage in their specific profession.
5. There is a perception that many Jews did not fight back when the Nazis rounded them up or sent them to concentration camps. Yet many of the individuals portrayed in this exhibit did resist deportation and oppression. How did they do so? Pick one of those individuals and write down how they resisted.
6. Resistance and standing up for yourself and for others takes many forms. Can you recall a time when you were challenged to defend yourself or another? Or perhaps, when you made a choice not to? What were the circumstances, and how do you come to that choice?
7. Most of the individuals in the portraits thought of themselves as Dutch or German whereas the Nazis saw them only as Jewish. Are there ways in which how you see yourself is different from how others see you? Write a list of three words you would use to describe yourself and then write a list of three words others might use to describe you. Are these two sets of attributes similar or different?
8. Are there novels or films you've read or watched that remind you of what you've seen today? Make a list of those novels or films and write why you think they are similar to what you've learned from this exhibit.