

# Repair the world: Groupwork in the Deggendorf Displaced Persons Center, 1945-1946

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**Abstract:** *This paper explores the formation of a transitory community in the UNRRA Jewish Displaced Persons Center in Deggendorf, Germany, where Holocaust survivors used social groupwork to preserve history and culture, to restore humane values, and to prepare for new lives. Archival materials such as the camp newspaper, the Deggendorf Center Revue, document how task groups and activity groups promoted community development and encouraged individual and communal recovery from trauma. Viewed from recent theoretical perspectives on cultural memory, citizenship, and hope, the experiences of the ‘surviving remnant’ offer lessons for social groupwork with migrants today.*

**Keywords:** *groupwork; Holocaust survivors; recovery; citizenship; hope; migrants; refugees*

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## The surviving remnant

At the end of the Second World War in Europe, on May 8, 1945, an estimated six million refugees were stranded far from home. The Allies had been planning for a post-war refugee crisis since 1943, when the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA), the first United Nations agency, was formed (Displaced Persons: Administration, 2018; UNRRA, 1946; Wyman, 1989). After the war, repatriation efforts went largely as planned. The Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHEAF), under the command of General Dwight D. Eisenhower, provided transportation, food, and medical supplies for six million ‘displaced persons’ or DPs, while the civilian-led UNRRA administered temporary accommodations or DP camps. By the end of summer 1945, four million out of six million displaced persons had been repatriated from the U.S. Occupied Zone of Germany and Austria (UNRRA, 1946; Nadich, 1953).

In years of preparing for Europe’s postwar refugees, however, the Allies had not anticipated ‘the problem of the Jews’ (Lowy, 1945, early-Nov., p.1; Nadich, 1953). Only 100,000 Jews remained in Western Europe at the end of the war, although that number grew to 300,000 during the following year, when Jews who had tried to return to their former homes in Poland and Eastern Europe were violently expelled (Vida, 1967; Warhaftig, 1946). In contrast to most other displaced populations, the ‘stateless and non-repatriable Jews’ had no country that was willing to receive them and no country to which they could return (Atkin, 1945, late Nov.)

At first, the U.S. military confined Jewish displaced persons in former Nazi concentration camps and labor camps, where they were held in quarantine following outbreaks of typhoid and cholera (Nadich, 1953; Nadich, 2007). Other Jewish displaced persons were dispersed to UNRRA DP camps that housed hostile non-Jewish populations who had sympathized with the Nazis (Eisenhower, 1945, Sept. 18; Harrison, 1945, August). Jewish chaplains in the U.S. Army, American war correspondents, and Earl J. Harrison, a special envoy from Washington, raised a public outcry, and President Harry S. Truman cabled Eisenhower ‘urging a rapid improvement in the situation’(Eisenhower, 1945, Sept. 14).

Eisenhower acted ‘with utmost speed.’ He arranged for ‘persons of

Jewish faith ... who are without nationality or who do not desire to return to their country of origin' to be assembled in separate displaced persons centers with UNRRA teams 'experienced in the care of Jews.' Jewish displaced persons would be relocated from former concentration camps 'as soon as they were out of quarantine and well enough to travel.' In a directive to his subordinate commanders, Eisenhower ordered: 'Everything should be done to encourage displaced persons to understand that they have been freed from tyranny' (Eisenhower, 1945, Sept. 18). When General George S. Patton refused to abide by these directives, he was reassigned from his command of the Third Army (Nadich, 1953; Schwarz, 1953).

The ultimate fate of the Jewish displaced persons, as Eisenhower realized, was beyond military control. It was the politicians of the world who would decide whether and where to open immigration to Jewish refugees. In the meantime, however, the Jews were making their own plans. In the last months of the war, as they awaited liberation from concentration camps or from hiding, small groups of survivors had adopted a biblical name, the '*She'erith Hapleitah*,' which translates as 'the surviving remnant' or 'the rest that remain' (Mankowitz, 2002).

The *She'erith Hapleitah* advocated with the U.S. military for survivors' immediate needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, and medicine. They maintained 'an extensive list of survivors' to help families find one another (Central Committee, 1946), and they assumed communal responsibility for documenting the past, restoring cultural traditions, and preparing for emigration. Within a few months of liberation, the *She'erith Hapleitah* had formed 'a network of representative and camp councils, political movements, newspapers, youth groups, children's homes and schools, vocational training, and a wide range of cultural pursuits' (Mankowitz, 2002, p. 4). Survivors established Jewish self-governments within the UNRRA displaced persons centers and organized the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the United States Occupied Zone of Bavaria (Gringauz, 1947). In September 1946, the U. S. military recognized the Central Committee as 'the legal and democratic representation of the liberated Jews in the American Zone' (Displaced Persons: Administration, 2018; The Central Committee, 2017; Mankowitz, 2002).

## Recovery through groups

The *She'erith Hapleitah* did not have the resources or the knowledge to provide trauma-informed mental health services as we might design such interventions today, however they worked toward recovery and 'rehabilitation' through groups. Task groups, such as departments and committees, had specific objectives, while activity groups pursued educational, cultural, and political interests. As with today's treatment groups for trauma survivors, experiential groups in the displaced persons centers provided opportunities to 'connect with others' and 'to normalize and validate' traumatic experiences through mutual aid (Knight, 2009, p. 241; Knight, 2006). Task groups and activity groups served, in effect, as 'nondeliberative' groupwork practice. As explained by Norma C. Lang (2016):

Nondeliberative creative, intuitive, expressive, and holistic work has achieved problem solutions without precisely articulated problem definitions; as such it is characterized as an 'everyday' modality ... Nondeliberative social group work takes place in a lived, experienced reality of the participants ... (Lang, 2016, pp. 102-103)

Groups in the Jewish displaced persons centers were rarely, if ever, led by professional social workers. An UNRRA census of Jewish displaced persons in Europe counted only 24 out of 50,071 respondents who reported their occupations as social work (UNRRA, 1946, Dec.). Nonetheless, task groups and activity groups promoted social work values, such as affirmation of the dignity and worth of the individual, respect for individual and community self-determination, and preparation for citizenship in a democracy (Alissi, 2009; Barsky & Northern, 2017; Glassman, 2008; Konopka, 1978; Lowy, 1976).

The surviving remnant may have been guided toward social groupwork by religious and cultural tradition. In Jewish religious practice, a *minyan* or group of at least ten adults is required for daily ritual prayers, for public readings from the Torah (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible), and for the mourners' prayer (Jacobs, 1999). As explained by Rabbi Hayim Halevey Donin (1980), the ancient tradition of praying in groups was 'one of the distinguishing features of Jewish religious prayer from its earliest beginnings':

Communal worship provided a cohesive influence in the Jewish community. It added meaning to the fact that most of the prayers were formulated in the plural and not in the singular, stressing the responsibility that Jews have for one another. It seemed to make the community more aware of and responsive to the needs of the individual. (Donin, 1980, pp. 14-15)

In a broader sense, the religious and cultural tradition of *tikkun olam* calls upon Jews to improve the social welfare or to 'repair the world' (Cohen, 1907; Neusner, 2002; Shatz, Waxman & Diament, 1997). Leaders of the surviving remnant expressed their sense of responsibility for the rehabilitation of the Jewish people and the restoration of the 'human community' (Gringauz, 1947; Mankowitz, 2002; Lowy, 1945, early Nov., p.1), and within the Jewish displaced persons centers, groupwork offered a culturally resonant approach to realizing these goals.

## Becoming a groupworker

The social work educator Louis Lowy (1920-1991) remembered his groupwork activities in the Terezín ghetto and the Deggendorf Displaced Persons Center as professionally formative experiences, although he did not study social work until after the war. Lowy had been raised in a German-speaking Jewish family, and he had been studying philosophy at Charles University in Prague when he and his parents were deported to the Terezín ghetto (Thereisenstadt in German) in December 1941. Believing that the Jews were to be interned in a self-governed Jewish city, Lowy observed Jewish administrators as they organized community life. Lowy volunteered to care for orphaned youth, and drawing from his training in social pedagogy, he offered lessons in English and the humanities through group activities (Gardella, 2011; Makarova, Makarov & Kuperman, 2004; Pawel, 2000; Scheurenberg, 1982).

It did not take long for the Jewish community to discover the real purpose of the ghetto. Terezín was to be used as a transit center where Jews from Western Europe were being assembled for deportation to Auschwitz-Birkenau and other concentration camps in the East. Of an estimated 140,000 Jews who passed through Terezín, only 17,000

survived (Bondy, 1989; Theresienstadt, 2018). Louis Lowy was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, and he endured a sub-labor camp of Auschwitz, a death march, and an escape across Europe before making his way back to Prague at the end of the war. His parents did not survive (Gardella, 2011).

Returning to Terezín in June 1945, Lowy was smuggled into the quarantined ghetto, now under Soviet administration, where the Jewish population had already begun planning their liberation. Lowy volunteered with the ghetto Dissolution Committee to interview those Jews who wished to move from Soviet occupation to the U.S. Occupied Zone. Fluent in German, Czech, English, and French, Lowy was uniquely prepared to negotiate with representatives of UNRRA, and he emerged as the informal leader of 500 Jews who were released from Terezín and transported to an UNRRA Jewish Displaced Persons Center that was being established in Deggendorf, Germany. An additional 300 Terezín survivors soon followed (Gardella, 2011).

UNRRA had requisitioned a former military barracks in the small garrison town of Deggendorf to accommodate Jewish DPs. The UNRRA camp director, Carl Atkin, was not as 'experienced in the care of Jews' as Eisenhower had intended. A veteran of the U. S. Army, Atkin was himself Jewish, but he had neither social service experience nor proficiency in German, the primary language of the Jews from Terezín. Nonetheless, Atkin was dedicated to his task and sympathetic to the principle of community self-determination, as he explained in 'Community Spirit,' an article in the DP camp newspaper, the *Deggendorf Center Revue*:

This community is one of the few that is different from the rest of the [UNRRA] centers in that the people who live here have no country to which they wish to return. Until the destinations of the people here are decided, we will have to cooperate even more to make this the ideal community center ... . In approaching the task which lies ahead, one cardinal principle above all else should motivate our actions and govern our policies. That is the principle of helping people to help themselves. (Atkin, 1945, Late Nov., p. 1)

Impressed by Louis Lowy's leadership skills, Atkin invited him to organize the Jewish community, and Lowy accepted the challenge with a sense of social purpose that he described in 'Returning,' his first article in the *Deggendorf Center Revue*:

The history of mankind is a continuous fight for progress and for the creation of humanity, the creation of a human community. All through history, despots have arisen who wanted to delay and hinder the way, but in the end, even their actions have prepared the way forward. Now we are again facing a break of time ... (Lowy, 1945, early Nov., p. 1).

## Cultural memory

Recovery from trauma was an individual and communal process, as well as an historical process, for the surviving remnant. Just as Louis Lowy viewed the Nazi regime as a 'break of time,' so researchers from various disciplines have used the metaphor of a 'time line' to describe survivors' efforts to integrate their pre-traumatic and post-traumatic lives. In his study of Holocaust testimonies, literary critic Lawrence Langer attributed the loss of fluency in survivors' life stories to the dissociation of traumatic experiences: 'Witnesses struggle with the impossible task of making their recollections of the [concentration] camp experience coalesce with the rest of their lives' (Langer, 1991, p. 2). To psychoanalyst Dori Laub, who examined the 'absolute loneliness' of survivors, 'the task at hand is to define a place for the survivor in history, in memory, in present life, and in future aspirations' (Laub, 1998, p. 800). Holocaust educator Jacqueline Giere explained that the surviving remnant used educational and cultural activities as a 'time line' that placed individual suffering into the group's story (Giere 1998, p. 911). Writing in the field of Baltic Studies, social work researcher Jaak Rakfeldt explored how life stories and cultural activities pass into the collective or cultural memory. The shared 'memory of memories,' in Rakfeldt's words, 'has helped oppressed peoples maintain their ethnic, religious, and national identities' (Rakfeldt, 2015, pp. 539-540).

For Jews, in particular, the preservation of cultural memory had been a survival strategy for thousands of years. After the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE, the Jews sustained their religion through oral tradition and the group study of ancient texts (Donin, 1980; Laub, 1998). It is not surprising, therefore, that the *She'erith Hapleithah* understood the restoration of history and culture as a primary task. In November 1945, the Central Committee of Liberated Jews formed

a Historical Commission that sought to document war atrocities, and further, to recall memories of Jewish life and culture from before the war. Newspapers in the Jewish displaced persons centers, such as the *Deggendorf Center Revue*, solicited written materials, including diaries, correspondence, official documents, photographs, and books. Oral sources were equally valued, and volunteers were encouraged to collect oral histories, folktales, idiomatic expressions, humor, and songs (Mankowitz, 2002, p. 103).

Beyond the recovery of artifacts, groups in the Jewish Displaced Persons Centers revived cultural memory through educational and cultural programs. As described by Jacqueline Giere, 'The *She'erith Hapleithah* took as their symbol a tree stump from which a tiny leafed branch was spouting. Cultural activities in the DP camps were a manifest example of the leaves on that branch' (Giere, 1998, p. 703).

In the Jewish self-government of the Deggendorf Center, the Culture Department, led by Kurt Buchenholz, organized task groups, such as those that managed the newspaper, library, and schools; and activity groups, such as theatrical societies, language clubs, and youth groups. As Buchenholz explained in the *Deggendorf Center Revue*:

During the last years of oppression, our cultural life was abruptly stopped and about to break down completely. Especially for the Jewish youth there was great danger to grow up without any culture. Regarding this fact, we thought it a primary duty to correct things immediately after our liberation. The members of the Culture Department devoted themselves to this task (Buchenholz, 1945, early Nov., p. 4).

## Citizenship

As the Deggendorf Center grew in size and diversity, the Jewish self-government sought to meet the needs of an increasingly multicultural Jewish population. In August 1945, 300 Yiddish-speaking Jews from Poland joined the original 800 German-speaking Jews from Terezín, and Jewish refugees from Eastern Europe continued to arrive through the following year (Nadich, 1953; *Verzeichnis der Einwohner*, 1946, January 1). Western and Eastern European Jews were foreigners to each other, divided by language, culture, and often, socio-economic status.

The community would come together, Louis Lowy believed, not only by preserving cultural memories, but also by practicing citizenship in a democracy.

Mental health researchers today understand ‘citizenship’ as an approach to integrating marginalized populations into society (Rowe, 2015). As explained by Chyrell Bellamy and colleagues:

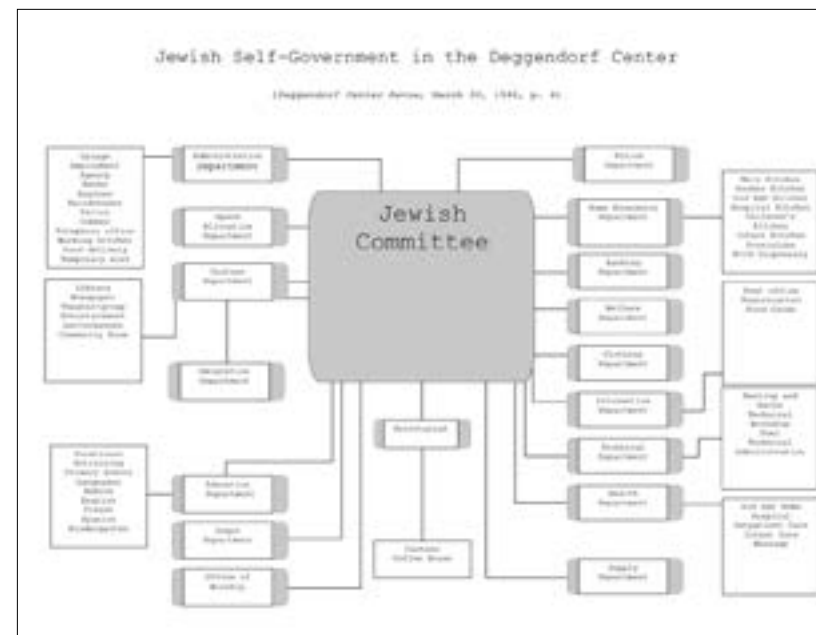
Citizenship is a term often tied to legalities of national placement or the essential rights of residents. In mental health, however, the term has broader reach. Rowe and colleagues define citizenship as the strength of individuals’ connections to the rights, responsibilities, roles, and resources available to them and to the supportive relationships developed in their communities (Bellamy, Kriegel, Barrenger, Klimczak, Rakfeldt, Benson, Baker, Benedict, Williamson, and MacIntyre, 2017, p. 268).

The *She’erith Hapleitah* appreciated citizenship as only stateless persons can. Having lost their legal status as citizens under the Reich Citizenship Law of 1935 (Nuremberg, 2018), they did not distinguish between social and political participation. Leaders of the surviving remnant sought to integrate or reintegrate into society through the exercise of legal and political rights, and the Jewish self-governments of displaced persons centers established their own legal systems and courts of law. In ‘Rehabilitation,’ an article in the *Deggendorf Center Revue*, Louis Lowy introduced the newly formed law court as a commitment to ‘the absolute value of any human being’:

What does rehabilitation mean? ... It is the reestablishment of the greatest values we possess, our soul, our heart, our humanity, our self-esteem. It is our return to becoming men with self-respect, conscious of the responsibility we are bearing for ourselves and for those who follow ... (Lowy, 1945, late Nov., p. 1).

On October 15, 1945, the Deggendorf Center reached a milestone in community development with the democratic election of the Jewish Committee, the executive body of the Jewish self-government. As reported in the *Deggendorf Center Revue* ((Neuwahl, 1945, early Nov), twelve candidates conducted a spirited election campaign for positions on the five-member committee. On the morning of election-day, October

15, 1945, voters lined up early at their assigned polling stations. A ballot box was taken into the camp hospital to ensure that patients could vote. When the polls closed at 7:00 p.m., 80 percent of eligible voters had cast their ballots, electing Louis Lowy as chairman, and Szymon Gutman, a leader of the Polish Jews, as a member of the Jewish Committee (Neuwahl, 1945, early Nov.). As Lowy had hoped, various ethnic and political factions joined together as citizens of the Deggendorf Center (Neuwahl, 1945, early Nov.). The Jewish self-government ultimately consisted of 18 resident-led departments with responsibilities for all aspects of community life (*Jüdische Selbstverwaltung*, 1946).



Democratic elections in the Jewish displaced centers were part of a larger political movement by the *She’erith Hapleitah* to organize the Central Committee of Liberated Jews in the U.S. Occupied Zone of Bavaria (Mankowitz, 2002; Schwartz, 1953). Louis Lowy was heartened by his meetings with other Jewish leaders. On January 27, 1946, he travelled to Munich to represent the Deggendorf Center in the inaugural conference of the Central Committee of Liberated Jews. As he reflected

in the *Deggendorf Center Revue*:

The problems that had to be met and the expectations under which we came were so different from the reality that awaited us. Only after information from Munich, when we made connection to the world, did we learn that we weren't alone in a foreign country, that we were only part of a larger Jewish community and that we weren't the only liberated Jews. This recognition gave us courage, hope, and strength, and with this basis we could overcome what seemed impossible (Lowy, 1946, April 15, p. 1).

## Hope

Hope theory is field of study within positive psychology. As defined by C. R. Snyder and colleagues, 'Hopeful thought reflects the belief that one can find pathways to desired goals and become motivated to use those pathways ... Hope so defined serves to drive the emotions and wellbeing of people' (Snyder, Rand, and Sigmon, 2002, p. 257). A necessary condition for hopeful thinking is the availability of social support (Snyder, 2002).

Social groupwork in the Deggendorf Center helped survivors develop hope as they prepared for and imagined a future. Task groups and activity groups gave residents 'pathways' to their desired goal of immigration and the motivation to use them. Groups affirmed survivors' strengths and skills as they worked toward a common purpose, such as making plans for their families, serving the Jewish people, or contributing to the greater good. Voluntary leaders of departments, committees, and other task groups in the Jewish self-government faced obstacles and setbacks together. Participants in activity groups, such as vocational classes, language clubs, and youth groups, practiced new skills for new lives, building confidence that those lives would be possible.

During the Deggendorf Center's first year of operation, from 1945 to 1946, most residents hoped to immigrate to the United States (Nadich, 1953), and they enjoyed learning American idioms by listening to broadcasts of popular music and by viewing American films (Gardella, 2011). The Jewish self-government issued camp money that was based on U.S. currency, and residents exchanged 'Deggendorf Dollars' with the unspoken promise that they would use real dollars someday. Social

activities that survivors had once taken for granted – attending or performing in a concert, reading or writing to the newspaper, debating political issues, and even settling disputes in a court of law – all encouraged hope for a future.

Louis Lowy was particularly proud of the Emigration Department, which maintained a registry of the Deggendorf Center population. New arrivals entered their information in the registry, including their names, ages, prewar addresses and occupations, and preferred destinations of immigration (*Verzeichnis der Einwohner*, 1946). The Emigration Department disseminated copies of the registry to the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, the International Red Cross, and various Jewish philanthropies in order to publicize their survival throughout the world (Gardella, 2011).

Jewish survivors in the Deggendorf Center did not have passports or identity papers, and in a striking example of 'hopeful thinking,' the Emigration Department prepared identity cards that could serve, in effect, as passports for stateless persons. The identity cards were designed to impress officials in any language with a photograph, official-looking stamps, and the signatures of the UNNRA director and the chairman of the Jewish Committee (Jewish Committee, 1945, May 8).

As it turned out, the Emigration Department expedited the immigration of several hundred Deggendorf Center residents to the United States, including Louis Lowy, in April 1946 (Gardella, 2011; Königer, 1946; Truman, 1945, Dec. 22). Beyond documentation, the Emigration Department equipped survivors with the skill of hopeful thinking, a skill that they would need more than ever 'for a new free life in a free land' (Lowy, 1946, Jan. 12, p.1).

## New beginnings

When Jewish refugees arrived in New York City, they were greeted by American social workers who did not speak their language, German or Yiddish; and survivors who overcame the language barrier found that they were not being heard or believed. Psychiatrists throughout the world predicted that Holocaust survivors would never live productive lives (Eitenger, 1998; Rosenbloom, 1994; Rosenbloom, 1995).

Undeterred by the ignorance or indifference of professional service

providers, survivors continued to help themselves in groups. They joined *Landsmanschaften* or societies for people from the same regions or towns in Europe, and they formed social and philanthropic associations, including associations that continue to serve their descendants today (Helmreich, 1996; Together, 2018).

In 1996, fifty years after the first immigrants from the Deggendorf Center arrived in the United States, William B. Helmreich published his longitudinal study, *Against All Odds: Jewish Survivors of the Holocaust and the Successful Lives They Made in America* (Helmreich, 1996). Helmreich found that survivors and their children had fared comparably well to American-born Jews in the areas of family life, economic self-sufficiency, educational achievement, and civic engagement. Most survivors married other survivors, and their children were more likely than other American Jews to enter the helping professions (Helmreich, 1996).

Some survivors who became social workers in the United States, such as Hans Falck, Alex Gitterman, Gisela Konopka, and Louis Lowy, had a defining influence on the development of international groupwork education (Falck, 1988; Gitterman & Germain, 2008; Konopka, 1988; Lowy, 1976; Wieler & Zeller, 1995). In the tradition of *tikkun olam*, they called on their students to become social activists and reformers who were willing to advocate for a more just and humane society. In Lowy's words:

At this juncture in the history of our profession we have little choice except to go forward with our heritage, filled with determination to work toward a better world. But the world will only be better if we work at it and use all our available resources. To be true to ourselves may involve us in occasional – possibly even frequent – conflicts with the very society that sanctions us ... But because of our obligation to this same society, we have to advance our knowledge and skills to change it for the better, guided by basic values rooted in our belief in the worth of men (Lowy, 1960, p. 102).

## Social groupwork today

The postwar refugee crisis in Europe pales in comparison to the global migration crisis of our own time. According to the United Nations, more than 65.6 million migrants have been 'forcibly displaced by conflict

or persecution,' including '22.5 million refugees, over half of whom are under the age of 18,' and 10 million stateless persons 'who have been denied a nationality and access to basic rights such as education, healthcare, employment and freedom of movement' (UNCHR, 2018). The growing humanitarian disaster involves refugees, asylum-seekers, irregular migrants, and other migrants throughout the world. Although the U. N. continues to seek 'cooperation on a global level,' the legal infrastructure for the protection of refugees and migrants is collapsing under the pressures of unprecedented migration flows and the fierce political backlash within receiving nations (IOM, 2018; Open Society, 2016; UNHCR, 2018).

Social workers have the ethical obligation to advocate for human rights; to provide effective, culturally resonant social services; and to stand as allies with migrant populations (Lowy, 1960; NASW, 2018; IFSW, 2012). In these efforts, we have much to learn from the past. Although the context was historically unique, community development in the Deggendorf Displaced Persons Center offers lessons for social group workers today.

Upon their liberation in 1945, the *She'erith Hapleitah* organized a network of social services within the UNRRA Jewish displaced persons camps, and they asserted their right to represent European Jews. These accomplishments were made possible by alliances with influential outsiders, such as those in the media, the military, the U.S. government, and international philanthropies (Mankowitz, 2002). Social workers today, particularly those who are citizens of destination countries, have the social and political capital to serve as influential outsiders who advocate with and for migrant communities.

New arrivals in the Deggendorf Center shied away from UNRRA staff, who wore khaki military-style uniforms. Many survivors feared officials in uniform, a fear that would stay with them throughout their lives (Hulme, 1953; Irene F., 1992). Eventually, however, Jewish community leaders formed 'a working alliance' with UNRRA (Lowy, 1945, early Dec., p.2), and the *Deggendorf Center Revue* published affectionate tributes to UNRRA workers as 'the good friends they wish to be to us' (Gutfeld, 1946, late Dec., p.6; Dura, A., 1946, Feb. 15; Dura, A. 1946, May 18).

Social workers today do not need uniforms to be viewed with mistrust. Even so, groupwork is alive and well in migrant communities,

where task groups and activity groups preserve cultural traditions, encourage civic activities, and develop skills for the future (Araia, 2016; Investing in People and Culture, 2018; United We Dream, 2018). Social work agencies bring various communities together through art exhibits, cultural festivals, food fests, and charitable activities (ICR, 2018); and group workers support localities in planning civic forums, interfaith councils, and other mechanisms to mediate tensions between newly arriving and host populations (Ellerbrock, 2015; Casey, 2018). Just as UNRRA tried to ‘help people help themselves,’ so social workers from outside migrant communities are more likely to serve as allies or courtesy members than as leaders of migrant groups.

Mid-century social workers failed Jewish refugees when they refused to listen to refugees’ stories or to adapt prevailing theories and practices to emerging needs. In contrast, social workers today are learning with and from migrant communities as partners in social research. Oral history interviews and participatory action research methodologies, such as photovoice and digital storytelling, allow migrants to share their reality with the wider public and with an inquiring profession (Doel and Orchard, 2006; ICR, 2018; Lambert, 2013; Molloy, 2007; Oral History Assoc., 2018; Photovoice.org, 2018).

UNRRA eventually hired Jewish refugees for staff positions, setting a helpful example for social work agencies today (Gardella, 2011). Interpreters, family and youth workers, and health navigators from migrant communities improve the accessibility and effectiveness of human services, promote mutual adaptation and understanding among service users and providers, and develop culturally meaningful approaches to healing (Jacinto, Chapple, Nyiransekuye, & Molina, 2017). With access to professional credentials and education, social workers from migrant communities are entering professional leadership positions, just as they did in the postwar era.

The challenges have not become easier. Today as yesterday, social workers sustain a hopeful purpose in seemingly hopeless settings – child welfare agencies that receive migrant children who were separated from their families, family detention centers that originally were built as prisons, youth groups serving children whose parents may be deported at any time. Fortunately, social workers do not need to face these challenges alone. Just as Louis Lowy found ‘courage, hope, and strength’ when he met with other leaders of *She’erith Hapleitah* (Lowy,

1946, April 15, p. 1), so social group workers today are encouraged by participating in the International Association for Social Work with Groups. IASWG international and local activities help group workers preserve professional memories, enhance knowledge and skills, and find hopeful pathways for the challenges ahead (IASWG, 2018).

Louis Lowy spoke through time for all displaced persons when he described the heartbreak of the Deggendorf Center:

Not only have we lost families and dear friends who can never be replaced, not only does reflection cause continuous mourning in our hearts, but also our views of the present and future are unclear as never before (Lowy, 1945, early Nov., p. 1).

It is our task as social group workers to join with migrants everywhere in building community, raising hope, and repairing the broken world.

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