

## Lock(er) of Memory

Karen Frostig, Ph.D., Founding Director  
<https://www.lockerofmemory.com>



Skirotava Train Station

Photo credit: Karen Frostig (2007)

## Deportation Commemoration Project in Three Countries

### Background

The Deportation Commemoration Project is dedicated to remembering the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Germany and Austria's deportations to the East. The Jungfernhof concentration camp, Latvia's first concentration camp, represents Germany's earliest deportations to the Baltic States. The project will present the circumstances that determined the fate of 3984 Jews deported from Germany and the territory of Austria to this small makeshift camp located on the outskirts of Riga, Latvia.

The first transport destined for Riga, containing 1,000 Jews left Berlin on November 27,

1941. The train arrived in Riga on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The Riga ghetto was full. There was no place to house 1,000 German Jews so they remained on the train until the next day, when they were taken to the Rumbula Forest and shot into mass graves. Four more transports were scheduled to arrive in a matter of days. In order to manage these new transports, the Germans devised a two-step solution. Starting at 4:00 am on Sunday morning, November 30<sup>th</sup>, and again on December 8<sup>th</sup>, up to 24,000 Latvian Jews confined to the Riga Ghetto, were taken to the Rumbula Forest and shot into mass graves.

As these massacres were underway, four transports from four cities in Germany and the territory of Austria arrived in Riga and were diverted to the Mazjumprava Manor, an abandoned farm located outside of Riga. During the coldest winter on record, SS commandos in collaboration with the Latvian Auxiliary police turned the manor, lacking heat, shelter, or food into a brutally sadistic and ruthless camp. Up to 800 victims were killed or died of disease and inhumane treatment during the first two months of imprisonment. Two thousand more were shot into mass graves by the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing squads) in the Bikernieki Forest on March 26, 1942. At the end of the war, only 148 people survived. Regarded as an endangered camp, today many Holocaust historians and local Latvians have no knowledge of this camp.

### The Transports



November 27, 1941 First transport of Jews from Würzburg to Berlin.

Yad Vashem archives 7900/64

The Deportation Commemoration Project will take place on November 30, 2021, to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of five deportations leaving five cities: Berlin, Nuremberg, Stuttgart, Vienna, and Hamburg, to travel to Riga, Latvia. The project will tell the harrowing story of how 3,984 persecuted Jews ended up at the forsaken Jungfernhof concentration camp. Starting with the first Berlin transport, followed by the “Bloody Sunday” massacre, the Deportation Installation will conclude at the final destination point, the Skirotava train station and the Jungfernhof concentration camp.

The Deportation Commemoration Project will tell the chilling story of mass murder, during one of the bloodiest campaigns in history. By creating an installation that joins Germany, Austria, and Latvia in the imprisonment and murder of up to 30,000 Jews over the course of one week, the machinery of Nazism and its industrialized approach to mass murder will be on display. Rather than focus exclusively on the victims, the installation project provides context, while examining crimes of murder conducted under Nazi German occupation.

#### Developing Commemorative Events in Riga and Germany

A coordinated series of independent programs, initiated and sponsored by the German Embassy in Latvia, be presented in Riga and Germany on November 30, 2021, to commemorate the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of all deportations from Germany and Austria to the Baltic States. The Locker of Memory project team will work in cooperation with the German Embassy in Latvia and the Riga Committee in Germany to create two initiatives to commemorate the deportations and the recovery of memory at the Jungfernhof concentration camp, recently converted into a recreation park.

A team of historians, scientists, artists, videographers and technologists will compile archival photos and video clips about collection houses and transports, archival maps and 3-D maps, plus findings of site explorations, and contemporary footage of the Jungfernhof concentration camp to create a unique, 10-minute video bringing two stories into daylight: one about the deportations out of Germany and Austria and the other, showcasing Latvia’s first concentration camp, that has been abandoned for the past 80 years. Presented as a stream of consciousness experience, the video will capture an evidence-based depiction of the fragmented and chaotic process of bringing thousands of Latvian and German Jews to their deaths over the course of one week. Emotionally charged, monumental images of the different transports, will be projected onto the façade of the Skirotava train station. The authenticity of this surface

holding these iconic images, will strike a poignant chord. The Deportation Commemorative Project breaks open 80 years of silence surrounding the Skirotava train station and the Jungfernhof concentration camp, to reveal the hidden stories attached to both sites.



Photo of Skirotava Train Station with still from Stuttgart video, coupled with victims' names.



Photo of Skirotava Train Station with photo from camp, and victims' names. Credit: Karen Frostig (2007/2021)

The second initiative uses a 360-degree camera to create an interactive, 3-D tour of the Jungfernhof concentration camp, fully narrated and uploaded to the project website for public access. A live tour for guests traveling to Riga, will be streamed to the website on November 30<sup>th</sup>.

In conclusion, the Deportation Commemoration project regards Holocaust history as an integral component of national heritage. Recognizing the triadic relationship between Germany, Austria and Latvia, the project promotes empathy and understanding, while championing the structures of memory over forgetting the past.

### About the Director

Prof. Dr. Karen Frostig is an interdisciplinary, conceptual, public memory artist, author, cultural historian and social activist. She is Professor of Art at Lesley University teaching coursework in Trauma, Memory and Public Art. Frostig is also a scholar at Brandeis University's Women's Studies Research Center. Her father was an Austrian Holocaust survivor and her grandparents were deported to the Jungfernhof concentration in 1941. The [Locker of Memory Memorial Project](#) honors 3836 victims and 148 survivors of this abandoned camp. In 2013-2014, Frostig also directed [The Vienna Project](#), a temporary memorial dedicated to remembering seven persecuted Austrian victim groups, murdered under National Socialism.

Frostig holds dual citizenship in the United States and the Republic of Austria. The Locker of Memory project represents an international team of historians, scientists, artists and technologists, and a distinguished advisory board of 24 internationally renowned scholars.