



2017 HOLOCAUST SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM RECIPIENT UMA KUMAR

Uma Kumar is a lecturer in the Department of Central, Eastern and Northern European Studies (CENES) at the University of British Columbia since 2007. She teaches various courses on the Holocaust including *German Representations of the Holocaust*. Uma believes that humanity's strength in a global world lies in embracing diversity, and that is the message she tries to convey to her students.

YEAR OF IMPLEMENTATION IN REVIEW

Participation in the in-class seminar at Yad Vashem, Israel, as part of the CSYV Holocaust Scholarship Program, allowed Uma to uncover valuable archival and electronic resources on the Holocaust, which she was then able to incorporate into her classes. Uma designed a lecture on the transport of Jews from Düsseldorf to Riga, from the 11th to the 17th Dec 1941, for her 3rd and 4th year university students. The lecture is based on the Salitter report and testimony by Hilde Sherman that she was introduced to at Yad Vashem. The report is an account from one of the perpetrators, and the testimony serves to shed light on the same event, but from the victim's point of view.

Introducing this lecture to her class, she aimed to enable her students with the understanding that perpetrators could also serve as direct witnesses to the events of the Holocaust and furthermore, that perpetrator documents could be used to combat Holocaust Denial. In addition, Uma wanted to remind students that perpetrators were ordinary human beings, all of whom had a choice as to whether or not to help the victims. By doing so, she sought to encourage her students to reflect on the motivations of the perpetrators which caused them to act as they did. Was it blind obedience to orders? Or was it their conviction in the ideals of the Nazi ideology? Aiming to facilitate this reflection, Uma prompted her students to perform their own critical analyses of the perpetrator's report and the victim's testimony. For example, they were asked to examine the differences in content and style between the Salitter report and Hilde Sherman's testimony.

Another goal of the course was to introduce students to lesser-known killing sites of the Holocaust where victims of the Shoah were also deported and murdered such as the Riga Ghetto. Uma wanted to show her students that the concentration camps and death camps, such as Auschwitz, while being the biggest killing machines, were not the only murder sites.

In addition to her lectures, Uma also gave presentations to the wider community. On January 25, 2018, she organized a commemorative event at UBC together with the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, Hillel and The Centre for Israel & Jewish Affairs. Uma made a presentation about the Holocaust, followed by a talk by Dr. David Ehrlich, an Auschwitz survivor. After the lecture, the audience was invited to take part in discussion with the presenters. Uma lead the Q & A section. On February 15, 2018, Uma was invited to Hillel BC to run a workshop on the Shoah entitled The Holocaust: From the longest Hatred to Denial.