

Janice Steinhoff

Florida Holocaust Museum

55 Fifth Street South

St. Petersburg, FL 33701

Date visited:

January 27, 2022 (live)

Location:

The Florida Holocaust Museum is in downtown St. Petersburg, FL. The building is located on a small street off a larger main roadway that houses many shops, stores, other museums, condominiums, and restaurants. The museum has on-site parking for free and there is also metered street parking nearby.

Website:

<http://www.thefhm.org/>

Partnerships:

USC Shoah Foundation which is a non-profit organization who "is dedicated to making audio-visual interviews with survivors and witnesses from the Holocaust and other genocides..." (<https://sfi.usc.edu/>). With the Shoah Foundation, the museum has an exhibit called "Dimensions in Testimony," an interactive interview with Holocaust survivors. In these pre-filmed interviews, survivors detail their experiences during the Holocaust. Audience members can ask questions to the moderator who then will ask the interviewee the question, providing the interactive experience.

Yad Vashem which is Israel's official Memorial Remembrance Center. Yad Vashem is cooperating with the Shoah Foundation and the Holocaust Museum for the Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project for the Tampa Bay Area.

University of South Florida's Tampa Library and Department of History. Together, they have collaborated with the Museum to develop a virtual exhibition. "The goal of the project is to bring the historical and educational resources and the visual experience of the Museum's permanent exhibition to a wider audience and to preserve the content of the exhibition" (www.thefhm.org.)

Anti-Defamation League and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum partner with the Museum to provide Law Enforcement and Society: Lessons of the Holocaust. This program is for police agencies in Florida and provides them with a "unique ethics program" and the "goal of the program is to investigate the role the German police played during the Holocaust and examine the role of law enforcement in democracy today" (www.thefhm.org.)

Accreditation:

American Alliance of Museums

Publications:

I was not able to find publications from the Museum.

Programs for adult lifelong learning:

The museum hosts events including lectures with assorted topics, and a Live Survivor Speaking program for not only adults but anyone interested. They also participate in a Facebook Live series and have archived sessions as well to view. They have a FHM ON24 Suite which are free pre-recorded program webcasts. There is a self-guided virtual tour accessible via the website and content available on YouTube. The Museum provides multiple avenues and options for continuing learning.

Connections with libraries:

The Museum has many opportunities for connecting with schools and libraries. First, there is a library within the Museum, however at the time I visited, it was closed for renovation, so I was unable to explore. The other opportunities do not specifically mention libraries, however, focus on school age children's education. There is an Anne Frank Humanitarian Award given which honors humanitarian efforts of high school juniors. Resources are provided to educators including Holocaust Education Week education materials, field trip opportunities, teaching trunks (grade appropriate resources provide focusing on primary sources), ability to book speakers for classrooms, teacher training, virtual learning resources, primary source-based curriculums, and middle school outreach programs.

Reactions and Experience:

Touring this museum was such a heartbreaking, eye-opening experience. I loved it. First when you enter the building, you need to pass through security. There is a security guard at the door in addition to an x-ray for your bag and patrons need to walk through a metal detector. It made me sad to realize that this level of security was needed due to ongoing racial tensions continuing in our society. Once you enter the exhibit floor, you have the option to scan a QR code to listen to a guided tour of the exhibits via your phone. As you walk through the first floor, exhibits include *Antisemitism Throughout History*, *Timeline of the Holocaust*, *Rise of the Nazi Party*, *The Resistance*, *Ghettos and Camps*, *Heroes of the War*. On display is an actual railcar and track from Poland which was used to transport people to concentration camps and killing centers. There was no maintenance done to the car, it is as it was during the war. There was a section describing the involvement (or initially the lack of involvement) of countries such as the US and Great Britain, details of the Nuremberg Trials of the Nazi party, and displacement camps for the Jewish population who lost their homes, families, and everything once the war was over. Each exhibit had detailed written information, multiple artifacts (such as clothing, arm bands, ID cards, passports, shoes, and letters), and photos depicting images described in each section. There was also a large wall of photos donated by local families. These photos of European Jewish peoples before the war, some of whom survived and some that did not. Lastly on this floor was an exhibit showing other forms of racism and genocide throughout history, highlighting the need for continuing education and tolerance even today. Most of the collections were donated by survivors, liberators, and their families.

The second floor consists of the Dimension in Testimony (mentioned above) and a collection of artworks. All the artwork on this floor is by an artist named Samuel Bak. Mr. Bak, born in 1933, is a Holocaust survivor from Poland. He began his artwork at the age of 9 in a ghetto in Poland. This is a

special exhibit currently on display. The third floor consists of the library, artwork by Judith Weinshall Lieberman, wood carvings titled *Kaddish in Wood* by Dr. Herbert Savel. The third floor was also set up as the lecture room for discussions.

I also took the time to explore the website which I felt was amazing. In addition to all the exhibits you can see at the museum, the site also has traveling exhibitions which can be loaned out, virtual exhibitions, past exhibitions, special exhibitions, and featured exhibitions. If you are unable to physically get to the museum the website presents you with an effective way to see all the exhibits and learn about them through a virtual tour. Overall, I really enjoyed exploring this museum, although when I left, I was sad and angry at the images and reality of the suffering displayed inside. The Florida Holocaust has done a wonderful job as a historical cultural heritage center combining written history, artifacts, oral history, photos, and relics of tragic time in our history.

USC Shoah Foundation. <https://sfi.usc.edu/>

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