Between Marginalization and Recognition: Germany's Unfinished Reckoning with its Nazi Past

Roundtable and Discussion

June 12, 2026, 6-8 p.m., Information Center, Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, Cora-Berliner-Straße 1, 10117 Berlin

Roundtable: Oliver Gaida (Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe), Andreas Hechler (Berlin), Bozhena Kozakevich (German-Polish House), Lisa Smith (Research Centre on Antigypsyism)

Introduction und Chair: Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (Center for Research on Antisemitism)

The image of Germany as the world's "champion of remembrance" has long been under criticism. Different sides have questioned the Federal Republic's culture of memory: some point to its close connection to "Staatsräson", others point to increasingly ritualized forms of commemoration, while the rise of right-wing extremism has even led some observers to declare Germany's memory culture a failure.

At the same time, it is undeniable that this culture of remembrance has expanded and diversified in recent years. Regarding Nazi crimes, we are confronted with a broad commemorative landscape that acknowledges additional victim groups and produces new memorials and forms of remembrance.

Taking Stefanie Schüler-Springorum's book Unerwünscht (Unwanted) as a starting point, this event shifts the perspective toward victims and survivors of Nazi persecution who continued to face exclusion, discrimination, and limited recognition in the decades after 1945. How do their stories challenge the familiar narrative of the Federal Republic as a democratic success story? And what do they reveal about the continuities of antisemitism, racism, and other forms of exclusion in post-war German society until today?

Bringing together perspectives from scholarship, memorial institutions, and public history initiatives, speakers will present concrete projects and discuss how marginalized experiences can be made visible in research, commemoration, and public debate.

Oliver Gaida is a research associate at the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe. He was one of the curators of the exhibition project

on people persecuted under National Socialism as "asocials" and "professional criminals" and is a doctoral candidate at Humboldt University of Berlin.

Andreas Hechler is an author and educator and works in the IT sector. He is an associate member of Dissens – Institute for Education and Research and serves on the advisory board of the Organization Intersex International (OII) Germany. His great-grandmother was murdered in Hadamar as part of “Aktion T4.” His research focuses on intersectional discrimination and privilege, medical violence, Nazi “euthanasia,” ableism, politics of memory, intersex, masculinity, sexual violence, and algorithmic bias.

Bozhena Kozakevych specializes in the history of the 20th century in Central and Eastern Europe. Her research focuses on the intertwined history of Poland, Germany, Ukraine, and the Jewish community, as well as on cultures of remembrance, the politics of history, and the history of World War II. She participated in the “Preserving Memory” project, which established memorial sites in Ukraine for murdered Jews and Roma. In addition, she taught and conducted research at the Viadrina Center of Polish and Ukrainian Studies. Her dissertation topic is “Jews and Christians: Soviet Religious Policy in Multiethnic Berdychiv (1921–1964).” She is a research associate at the German-Polish House at the Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe.

Stefanie Schüler-Springorum is a historian of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Since 2011 she has been Director of the Center for Research on Antisemitism, since 2012 Co-Director of the Selma Stern Center for Jewish Studies (both in Berlin), and since 2020 Director of the Berlin branch of the Center for Research on Social Cohesion. In 2025 she published her book *Unerwünscht. Die westdeutsche Demokratie und die Verfolgten des NS-Regime* (Unwanted: The West German Democracy and the Victims of the Nazi Regime).

Lisa Smith is a Romani filmmaker, consultant, and curator committed to advancing Romani representation through film and cultural advocacy. From 2020 to 2024, she curated AKE DIKHEA? – The International Festival of Romani Film, a pioneering platform for Romani filmmakers and narratives. She is a research assistant at the Critical Film & Image Hub of the Research Center for Antigypsyism.