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Newsroom: Lawyers Under the Nazis

Roger Williams University School of Law

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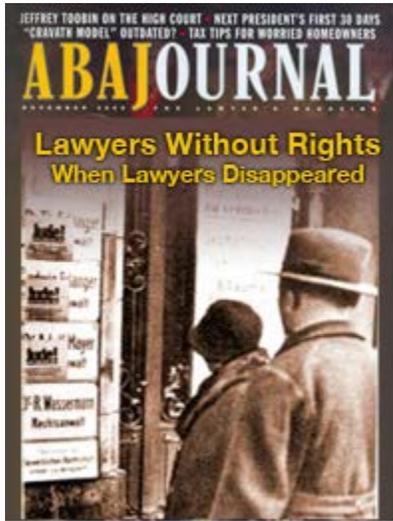
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Newsroom

Lawyers Under the Nazis

The 'Lawyers Without Rights' exhibition, sponsored by RWU Law and the U.S. District Court, portrays persecution of Jewish lawyers and judges in the Nazi era.



BRISTOL, R.I., July 9, 2015 – Some 70 years after its horrors unfolded, the Holocaust still has stories to reveal and lessons to share.

The highly acclaimed international exhibit, "[Lawyers Without Rights: Jewish Lawyers in Germany under the Third Reich](#)," will be visiting Rhode Island throughout August and September.

The showing – which will be installed at **Roger Williams University School of Law** in Bristol during August, and the **U.S. District Court** in Providence during September – is co-sponsored by the two organizations, in conjunction with the [American Bar Association](#) and the [Bundertsrechtsanwaltskammer](#), the German Federal Bar. The exhibit has been shown in dozens of cities in the U.S., Germany and throughout the world.

"The School of Law is honored to host this important exhibit, which covers a dark and troubling episode in human history," said **RWU Law Dean Michael J. Yelnosky**. "Perhaps most importantly, it gives us the chance to view the Holocaust through the lens of people just like us – lawyers and judges – which may deepen our sensitivity to the sometimes unfathomable horror of the Holocaust and move us to recommit ourselves to living up to the promise and potential of the legal profession."

“The United States District Court is proud to partner with RWU Law in bringing this important exhibit to Rhode Island,” added **Chief Judge William E. Smith**. “It is the rule of law, through the work of lawyers and judges, that protects and preserves the rights and liberties that we all enjoy as United States citizens.”



The idea for the exhibit was conceived in 1998 when an Israeli lawyer asked the regional bar of Berlin for a list of Jewish lawyers whose licenses had been revoked by the Nazi regime.

“The regional bar decided not only to research a list of names but also to try to find out more about the fates behind all those names,” said **Axel Filges, president of the German Federal Bar**. “Some were able to leave the country after the Nazis came into power, but very many of them were incarcerated or murdered. The non-Jewish German lawyers of those days remained silent. They failed miserably, and so did the lawyers’ organizations. We do not know why.”

After the Berlin bar transformed its research into an exhibit, other regional bars began asking whether they could show it and add their own research. “So, like a puzzle, a portrait of the fate of Jewish lawyers in Germany has emerged step by step,” Filges said.

The exhibit’s Rhode Island sponsors hope that it sparks both personal reflection and public dialogue about the lessons of history and how they shed light on our current institutions and values.

“The Nazis’ attack on Jewish lawyers and judges reminds us that the rule of law is indispensable to a just society,” Dean Yelnosky said. “Moreover, the failure of other members of the legal profession to come to the defense of their Jewish colleagues is a haunting reminder of the power of a violent dictator.”

Judge Smith agreed. “This exhibit reminds us of the vulnerability of the rule of law in the face of oppression and terror, and that we all share in the responsibility to defend our cherished system,” he said. “It is a stark and perhaps haunting reminder of our solemn obligations as lawyers, judges and citizens.”

“Lawyers Without Rights: Jewish Lawyers in Germany under the Third Reich” will be on display at Roger Williams University School of Law, Bristol, R.I., in the First and Second-Floor Atriums, from July 30 through August 31, 2015, Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. The exhibit will then move to the United States District Court for the District of Rhode Island, Providence, R.I., where it will appear in the Courthouse's Main Lobby from September 8 through October 2, 2015, Monday – Friday, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.