

The Charles Millett/Karl Sinai Collection (Shanghai Ghetto papers)

I. Personal Introduction

Welcome to the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. How is everyone doing?

My name is Grace Lee, recent UCLA grad (go Bruins!), and I'm a Getty Multicultural Intern. That is from a summer internship focused on various aspects of museum work, and includes visits to other museums, opportunities to network with people working in museum related careers, and exposure to behind the scene activities involved in museum settings. In my case, I am focused on museum education, so part of my internship includes giving a twenty-minute Focus Tour for this museum, which is a tour led by a member of the staff or interns and focus on a particular artifact, collection, or exhibit from our permanent collection. For this particular tour, I will be focusing on the Shanghai Ghetto papers, or the Charles Millett or Karl Sinai Collection.

Afterwards, feel free to stay and explore the rest of the museum; there's audio guides at the front desk for you to use as you walk through that will give you more detailed information about the topics addressed in the exhibits.

Behind me, there is the Tree of Testimony, which displays the testimonies of 52,000 Holocaust survivors from the USC Shoah Foundation.

Questions:

Can anyone tell me what the video structure looks like?

Why do you think the artist chose that structure to display the testimonies?

This exhibit is an interactive way for visitors to listen to a survivor testimony using the audio guide. Because of the sheer volume of testimonies that exists, such that it would take a person over a lifetime to watch over 120,000 hours of testimony, each video is displayed in full at least once a year. This is especially important today, as the Holocaust survivors who have eyewitness testimony will be gone by our generation. With this technology, we can ensure that the voices of the survivors are heard to commemorate the tragedy of the Holocaust long after they are gone.

II. Museum Introduction

Before we get started, I would like to ask, has anyone been in this museum before?

Possible follow up questions:

What do you remember from your last visit?

Any particular reason you came back?

Does anyone have a particular connection to the Holocaust – family, books, movies?

Let me just begin with a brief background of the museum. The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust is the oldest Holocaust museum in the nation. It started with a group of survivors (mainly from Poland) from Los Angeles who realized that together they had many artifacts and documents from the war or before and wanted to come together to both commemorate the Holocaust and to educate others about Holocaust history. The idea for the Museum came in 1961 and the first Museum space opened in 1978 in the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles building. After the Northridge Earthquake, the Museum operated out of temporary spaces up and down Wilshire Blvd until it was relocated to this building, which opened in 2010. Here we can display more of our archival collection as well as integrate new interactive technology to guide visitors in learning about this history.

So I would like to ask you all, what do you know about the Holocaust?

After listening, give as answer: The Holocaust is the systematic, widespread, state-sponsored destruction of nearly six million Jews and other targeted groups, including the Roma-Sinti and other religious and political prisoners, during the Second World War.

In our museum, we primarily focus on the major events that took place during the Holocaust, mostly during 1938 to 1945. For our museum, we have these events organized in chronological order. The museum starts here (point towards Room 1) from the *World that Was*, which looks at the general history of the Jewish people and the pattern of persecution that existed prior to Hitler's rise in power. The artifact this tour is focused on will be in the room focused on *World Response and Resistance*.

III. About the Room and the Artifact

This is room 6, focusing on *World Response and Resistance*. This room looks at the courageous responses of brave individuals, domestic organizations, and the international community to Germany's assault against the basic human rights of the Jewish population. This room honors these efforts to fight against the injustices of the Nazis.

As I mentioned earlier, today we are focusing on the Charles Millett or Karl Sinai Collection. These papers are loaned to us by a man named Charles Millett, whose name had been changed from Karl Sinai. Charles, or Karl, and his parents fled from Austria to Shanghai during the war.

The documents and photographs we have before us today give us a glimpse into just one family's experience during the war.

Here to the left of the case you see an Austrian birth certificate for Karl Sinai- it is in German and was issued by the Registry Office of the Israeli Cultural Community of Vienna. He was born November 27, 1937. **These photographs are of Karl with his parents and grandmother.**

IV. The Artifact in relation to the Room

The reason is that many of the 20,000 Jewish refugees in Shanghai who survived the war owe their lives to consuls who resisted superior orders and issued visas to China. One such individual is featured in the panel over there. Chiune Sugihara, better known as Sempo Sugihara, was a Japanese consul in Kovno, Lithuania who issued visas for Jews to leave Europe for Shanghai. At that time period, Shanghai was occupied by Japan, which was an ally of Germany. Because of the Battle of Shanghai in 1937 between Japan and China, Shanghai was the only port in the world that allowed entry without a visa or passport. However, Jews still needed a visa to book tickets out of Europe. Room 2 discusses the difficulty of immigration and the obstacles many had in attempting to leave. Sugihara helped by issuing over three and a half thousand visas that saved the lives of more than two thousand Polish-Lithuanian Jewish refugees. Another individual who helped issue visas to get Jews to Shanghai was the Chinese consul in Vienna, Austria named Ho Feng Shan, who is not featured in any of our panels. However, he was also able to save the lives of thousands of Austrian Jews by defying his superiors, who wanted China to have a good relationship with Germany.

Who knows about the Righteous Among the Nations?

[interaction]

The Righteous Among the Nations are non-Jews who helped Jews during the Holocaust. Yad Vashem, a center for Holocaust remembrance, honored Ho and Sugihara for risking their lives and careers to save Jews during this time period. This room, which honors the memory of each act of resistance, holds this artifact as evidence that people like Ho and Sugihara were there to do what was right and good in the midst of the evil that was taking place in this historical time period.

V. Introduction of the Shanghai Ghetto

So moving on to the Shanghai Ghetto itself... Before we get into that, I want to know, has anyone heard of this ghetto before?

[interaction]

Before it was officially established, Jewish refugees were able to access Shanghai's International Settlement. Approximately 20,000 Jewish refugees fled to Shanghai, China from Nazi Germany, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Poland, and Lithuania during the rise of Nazism and World War II. The journey from Europe to China was long and hard for many, and Shanghai itself was crime-ridden and squalid. You can see elements of that same journey Charles and his family went through in our collection. For instance:

- **This album you see in front of you chronicles the Sinai's family to Shanghai**, and mentions stops in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and the stop you see here: Hong Kong.
- We also see that World War II was truly a global war from the various languages seen in this collection, which includes Chinese, Japanese, English, French, and Russian. For example, you can see **this French document which registers Karl's mother, Grete, as a foreigner in the Shanghai French Concession**.
- **This Census form issued by the Shanghai Municipal Police**, on the other hand is in English, Chinese, and Japanese, and shows that the Sinai family arrived in 1938, shortly after Karl was born. It also lists where they lived, the relationship of each person, and their nationality, occupation, and marital status.
- **These certificates of residence and the permit to sojourn in China** were issued in 1940. The last two numbers you see listed on these documents correspond to the calendar system we are used to, but the year corresponds to the number of years the Emperor in Japan had reigned. Year 15 corresponds to 1940.

Before the war broke out in the Pacific, British and American citizens also lived in Shanghai, and refugee life continued with schools, synagogues, and businesses. There were also American Jewish organizations that helped the Shanghai refugees adjust to their new life. However, following the Japanese attack of Pearl Harbor, communication with the US ended and foreign aid to Jewish refugees were cut off.

On February 18, 1943, the Japanese authorities designated a "Restricted Sector for Stateless Refugees" that consisted of one square mile of land in the Hongkou District, where undocumented refugees who arrived after 1937 were required to move to. **This upright document in English is issued by the Ordinance of Japanese Military Authorities in Shanghai which ordered the introduction of the ghetto.**

While the Shanghai ghetto was the poorest and most crowded area of the city, unlike the European ghettos, the Shanghai ghetto was not walled to segregate its Jewish inhabitants. There were already roughly 100,000 Chinese residents in the area prior to the Jewish refugee influx, and the two ethnic groups coexisted there, though their relationship was not a very good one. One of the advantages of being in Shanghai was that even though Japan occupied the territory as Germany's ally, they were not anti-semitic as the Nazis were. However, under pressure from the Germans, the Japanese made sure curfews were enforced, food was rationed, and that everyone needed a pass to enter or leave the ghetto.

The living conditions were also deplorable. The living space was unsanitary and overcrowded, while the people faced near-starvation. One refugee described how the diseases were so terrible that even bananas and oranges had to be soaked in chemicals for an hour before being eaten. A bath was considered as a luxury and people shampooed with kerosene to avoid lice. Before the refugees knew about the diseases in the area, they drank untreated water and became sick from it. In 1944, the U.S. began constant air raids in Shanghai, some of which hit the civilian population, which lasted until the Atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Fortunately, unlike the European ghettos, the Shanghai ghettos did not deport its Jewish refugees to concentration camps and death camps.

It was not until after the war that many Shanghai Jewish refugees learned about the fate of their family and friends back in Europe. Many moved on from China after the war, and **we can see here a photograph signed by Karl's friends in Shanghai** as Grete and Karl move from Shanghai, **pass through the United States with a non-immigrant visa**, and fly on to **Hong Kong, then Manila**, and finally from **Manila to Sydney, Australia**, where they lived after the war.

VI. The Larger Story

Before we finish, I would like to add that many people do not understand why we showcase the Shanghai Ghetto papers in this particular room dedicated to resistance. We have another room that focuses on Jewish life in the ghettos, yet we have these papers here. In light of what you have just learned, can anyone tell me why we chose to display this artifact here?

[interaction]

Each of the artifacts in this museum tell a story, and this collection is just one of them. It gives us the documents showing one family's escape from Austria to Shanghai, and from the ghettos there to Australia. On a broader scale, these historical documents also shed insight into the Shanghai Ghetto, a lesser known aspect of Holocaust history, that brings light not only to the lives of Jewish refugees in Asia, but acknowledgement to the bravery of the Righteous Gentiles such as Sugihara and Ho.

VII. Conclusion:

This concludes the tour regarding the Shanghai ghetto papers. Does anyone have any questions?

[interact]

Again, I would like to encourage you to visit the rest of the museum, especially if this is your first time here. If you can, please go to the front desk and check out an audio guide and walk around the museum. You can look at the rooms I mentioned in the tour, such as Room 2 which goes over the difficulties of immigration for Jewish refugees and Room 3 which gives a sense of

what life was like in the European ghettos. Also, while walking through the museum, pay attention to the lighting and use of space and how it relates to the theme featured in each room. Make sure to come back to this room on *World Response and Resistance* for many other interesting stories and types of resistance.

If you have any questions, please feel free to ask me or a staff member or docent.
Thank you for joining our tour today.