



make an artistic statement about what happened to her father. The result is “I Will Survive: Dancing Auschwitz,” a four-minute video that depicts her, her father and her four children dancing gaily in a line at Auschwitz and other Holocaust venues to the tune of Gloria Gaynor’s disco hit, “I Will Survive.”

The video became a viral hit on YouTube in 2010.

“Video captures the subtleties of the members of my family’s emotions, as well as the eerie, surreal surroundings,” Korman says in a phone interview. “I had seen a few ‘flash-dance’ videos and I thought to myself, ‘What if we dance at the most impossible place on earth to dance – at Auschwitz?’”

McKean, Kichka and Korman are not alone. Nearly 70 years after the end of World War II, many children and especially grandchildren of survivors – the so-called Second and Third Generations – are exploring original, and sometimes controversial, ways of honoring and remembering the experiences of the survivor generation.

Communal Yom HaShoah ceremonies, like ones that will take place on Sunday to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day and will likely feature speeches, candle-lightings and singing of “The Partisans’ Song,” are giving way to often-individual expressions like dance, documentaries, websites, blogs and Facebook pages. And edgier forms like tattoos, graphic novels and videos. This new emphasis on individual expression of memory is a reflection of the Millennial generation, which often eschews the affiliations that typically characterized its grandparents’ generation.

These new styles indicate that “more people know today about” the Holocaust than in previous generations, says Elie Wiesel, Holocaust survivor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate. “The young people learn about it in school. There is more sensitivity to the tragedy than before.”

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“Many of the things that today are routinely expected would have been seen as too impious” in previous generations, says author-law professor Thane Rosenbaum, a son of Holocaust survivors. “You could never have gotten away with it.”

Members of the Third Generation, observers say, often learn more about survivors’ experiences than the Second Generation did, and they tend to have a less emotional and less traumatized perspective on the Shoah than their parents did. Survivors frequently were reluctant to discuss with their children what happened during the war; the children were hesitant to ask. Now aging, many survivors are more open with their grandchildren, who are more willing to inquire.

“There is an old saying that the Third Generation wants to remember what the Second Generation tries to forget,” says Michael Berenbaum, a prominent Holocaust historian. As a result, he says, the generation of survivors’ grandchildren “is seeking its own liturgy,” its own unique way to grasp the ungraspable.

Are these emerging forms legitimate? Are they acceptable to the survivors?

“I think the survivors, whether they like [the new types of Holocaust remembrance], appreciate that the Third Generation cares,” says Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League. “There’s really nothing offensive about [the] creative explosion,” says Foxman, himself a Holocaust survivor. “We need to find new vehicles to communicate the tragedy to new generations.”

“We have to be careful before we dismiss something as wrong or inappropriate,” says

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Menachem Rosensaft, son of Holocaust survivors and a vice president of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants. "You have to look at the intention of individuals. We need to let the process take place."

Many members of the Third Generation have returned to the European sites of their grandparents' birth and imprisonment, on such programs as March of the Living, and can approach the topic of the Shoah through education as well as emotion. Third Generation musicians are more likely to publicly play the music of Richard Wagner, the anti-Semitic composer beloved by Hitler. And in her memoir "Survivor Mentality" and in speeches, Karen Kaplan, a daughter of survivors in Chicago, publicly forgave "those people who murdered my family."

"I have the right," she tells The Jewish Week. "This was my family."

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"Compared to the 2Gs, the 3Gs have a more balanced view," Eva Fogelman, who studies Holocaust survivors, wrote in an essay on her website ([drevafogelman.com](http://drevafogelman.com)) in 2008. "They did not grow up with the concept of 'Jews who went like sheep to the slaughter.' The 2Gs heard this many times from the non-survivors around them. The 3Gs also lack deep-seated fears of anti-Semitism, fears that are generally more pervasive in the lives of Holocaust survivors and 2Gs."

"In my experience, the 2G experience was more complicated, more hush-hush, more shame- or victim-based," says Third Generation author Allison Nazarian, whose 2013 book, "The 3G Legacy," examines more than 100 grandchildren of survivors.

Some of the 3G practices, like Holocaust tattoos, can be shocking. "Their Skin Says, 'Never Forget,'" a New York Times headline declared two years ago. The significance of the tattoos to both the survivors and their grandchildren was the subject of a 2012 documentary, "Numbered," by Israeli filmmaker Uriel Simon. For Yom HaShoah three years ago, an Israeli publicity agency distributed thousands of temporary tattoos for teenagers.

To religious Jews, tattoos are a halachic issue; tattooing oneself is forbidden. To others, it's a symbolic issue. The 3Gs doing it see it as a way of individualizing the memory of people who were dehumanized by the Nazis.

Not everyone agrees with the tattoo as a mark of remembrance.

A "terrible idea. Why would anyone want to have a tattoo that turned us into a number and not a human being?" the daughter of Hungarian Holocaust survivors wrote in response to a question on Facebook last month. "Tasteless," former Knesset member Colette Avital told the Times of Israel.

"My now teenage daughter would like to honor my mother" — a 98-year-old Auschwitz survivor — "by getting a tattoo of her Auschwitz number," someone wrote recently to the [chabad.org](http://chabad.org) website. "My daughter and I are quite divided on this issue. Can you please help?"

The rabbi answering that question suggested that the teen and her peers be shown "that they need to lead the kind of lives that would make the six million souls proud."

In Edinburgh, Jonathan Litewski, said putting his Polish-born grandmother's number — 22900 — on his own body is "something I always knew" he would do. He grew up hearing his grandmother's stories. "She always wore short sleeves"; her number was always visible. "I always told her I would get a tattoo for her — she was pleased."

And his mother?

“She thinks it’s a good idea. She’s actually paying for it.”

Other innovations in Holocaust commemoration are less controversial but equally innovative.

Jane Korman, whose video of her family dancing at a death camp to a disco beat, found a mixed reception. “There were a number of my parents’ friends in Melbourne that found the work difficult and offensive,” she said in an email interview. “Even some of their children and grandchildren found it problematic. But the majority of people, especially the 3rd Gen are in support of the work.”

For Brooklyn artist Julie Mauskop ([juliemauskop.com](http://juliemauskop.com)), who is in her 30s, honoring the memory of her survivor grandparents is as simple as painting pictures of them in mundane situations like frying eggs or drinking coffee.

“With my ‘Survivors’ series, the goal wasn’t to make ‘Holocaust-based’ paintings,” she tells The Jewish Week. “Instead, I was trying to create a portrait of my bubbe and zaide, both Auschwitz survivors, as I saw them magically in my childhood.”

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The last several years have witnessed a flood of graphic novels inspired by Art Spiegelman’s groundbreaking 1986 work “Maus.” The novels focus on intergenerational relations and they usually picture the artists’ survivor-parents in more realistic terms than earlier, standard biographies had. The list includes Jeremie Dres’ “We Won’t See Auschwitz” (SelfMadeHero), Lily Renee’s comic book “Escape Artist” (Graphic Universe), Rutu Modan’s “The Property” (D+Q), Miriam Katin’s “Letting It Go” (Drawn & Quarterly) and “We Are On Our Own” (Drawn & Quarterly), Walter Chendi’s “The Gateway to Zion” (Edizioni BD), and a three-part series “Resistance,” “Defiance,” “Victory” (First Second) by Carla Jablonski and Leland Purvis.

The graphic novels offer a clearly subjective view of what the survivors – and subsequently, their children – went through. “The Property” opens with the words, attributed to Modan’s mother, “With family, you don’t have to tell the whole truth and it’s not considered lying.”

“It is unsurprising that the first generation of Holocaust scholars placed primary emphasis on establishing evidence – facts, proof – rather than on literary or aesthetic representation,” Ruth Franklin writes in “A Thousand Darkneses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction” (Oxford University Press). “The newest generation of writers has been trying ... to return art to the realm of aesthetics. In doing so, they demonstrate that the stories of the Holocaust remain tellable.”

A similar situation is occurring in recent films about the Holocaust. “As time moves on and fewer eyewitnesses to the Holocaust remain, the manner in which the memory is being kept alive will have to change,” Gerd Bayer, a professor of English and American Studies at Germany’s University of Erlangen-Nurnberg, told The Jewish Week. In “After Postmemory: Holocaust Cinema and the Third Generation,” which appeared in 2010 in *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, he writes that “The third generation of Holocaust cinema ... assumes the audience already knows films that belong to the first two generations and therefore approaches memory from a different perspective, one that is less geared to the past.”

In other words, contemporary art centered on the Holocaust contains an element of self-reflection, geared to the knowledge level of post-Holocaust generations.

“When I created my graphic novel, I had my generation in mind,” Michel Kichka said in an email interview. He is referring to people who grew up hearing, or, in the case of children who had reticent parents, not hearing, their parents’ wartime stories. For graphic artists like him, the family dynamics were as vital a component as the survivors’ actual experiences.

“We are not survivors of the Holocaust,” Kichka says. “We have survived our parents – which was not all the time easy.”

Holocaust commemoration today is mostly in the hands of the witnesses of the witnesses, not of the witnesses themselves. In a few generations, even this will disappear.

Future generations will probably produce their own forms of Holocaust commemoration. “We don’t know what it will be in 20 years or 50 years or 200 years,” Rosensaft says. “We know it will be different.”

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