

Graduate Spotlight

Every year, over 300,000 students and educators from Israel and around the world attend hundreds of educational activities, in a dozen languages, at the International School for Holocaust Studies. Featured here is one of the School's graduates, and what she has achieved since:

■ Stella Kalle has always found the history of the Jews of Greece fascinating, particularly those who lived in her native Thessaloniki, which had a majority-Jewish population for centuries. An educator living on the island of Lipsi, in 2012 Kalle read testimonies of Holocaust survivors from Greece as well as books concerning the Jewish community of Thessaloniki.



With a view to organizing a workshop for young people about the Holocaust, she attended a conference sponsored by EUROCLIO – the European Association of History Educators – in Germany in April 2013. During the conference, she met Richelle Budd-Caplan, Director of the European Department of Yad Vashem's International School for Holocaust Studies, who told her about Yad Vashem's educational seminars and referred her to the Athens-based Jewish Museum of Greece.

Intrigued by the chance to study the Holocaust with some of the world's leading historians and experts on the subject, Kalle applied to participate in an educational seminar at Yad Vashem and joined a cadre of Greek teachers in Jerusalem in July 2013. For the first time in her career, she had access to Yad Vashem's extensive databases and detailed lesson plans. "I knew it would be a unique opportunity to learn the most effective methods for teaching such a challenging topic," she said. One point that she found particularly significant was how the experts at Yad Vashem

discouraged role-playing. "We should never give the children the roles of victims or victimizers. I try to always remember that," she said.

Not long after returning home from Israel, Kalle began to put what she had learned into practice. Together with her students in different age groups and at different schools, she has carried out several projects commemorating prewar Jewish life in Greece, the impact of the Holocaust, and its aftermath. After reading an age-appropriate book about the war together, she and her second-grade students at the School of European Education of Heraklion on the island of Crete designed a large banner with the words "Never Again" and displayed it on International Holocaust Remembrance Day (27 January) in 2014.

Kalle eventually returned to Thessaloniki, where she currently lives, and became a teacher at the city's Jewish Primary School. Later in 2015, she organized a workshop about Jewish life in Thessaloniki before, during and after WWII. The school's entire fifth- and sixth-grade classes attended this in-depth learning opportunity.

In her largest undertaking in this field to date, Kalle translated into Greek one of Yad Vashem's most popular books for young readers, *I Wanted to Fly Like a Butterfly*. Working in partnership with the Moses Mendelssohn Jewish Gymnasium of Berlin and the Dr. Miriam and Sheldon G. Adelson Educational Campus of Las Vegas, Kalle and her students also organized an art exhibition based on the book at the Jewish Museum of Thessaloniki. Titled "Looking Back: A Child's Recollections of

Stella Kalle Greece

James Joseph McIntosh

the Holocaust through the Eyes of the Children Today," the exhibition afforded her students the opportunity to express the feelings and emotions that the protagonist's life sparked in them.

The exhibition opened in March 2016 under the auspices of the Hellenic Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs, the Thessaloniki Municipality, the Embassy of Israel to the Hellenic Republic, and the Jewish community of Thessaloniki. Teachers and students from many schools visited the exhibition, and it garnered impressive coverage in the Greek press.



"It was a challenging and demanding goal to achieve, but my students and I were very pleased that we made it come true," said Kalle. "Commemorating death is a really important thing to do, but commemorating life is equally important. Now I try to teach my students how they must struggle with difficulties and never lose hope. I also try to emphasize all those people who helped Jews survive. They are an example of humanity, and this is the path I encourage my students to choose."

The author works in the European Department, International School for Holocaust Studies.