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## A Lamentable Absence of Sexy Scandals

One of the things that I have always believed is that there is no such thing as Truth with a capital “T.” I believe (and there might be one or two ...hundred... theorists and philosophers who have argued the same thing) that there are many perspectives, views, experiences, and understandings in the world. As an anthropologist, it’s my job to relish the messy complexities of life, not to try to simplify things into generalizable bullet points. (I consider this my job as a human being too, but maybe that’s just me.)



Me presenting my research in Lithuania last summer.

Therefore, I feel compelled to speak up when I see inaccurate generalities being given considerable purchase in place of in-depth, balanced reasoning.

There are many individuals who are very critical of the state of Holocaust education in Lithuania. I can understand why. There are a lot of problems here –and this is not just my opinion, it’s the opinion of a lot of other people who work here on this very topic.

Nonetheless, in the interest of self-disclosure, I am no stranger to making controversial and cheeky statements about life, education, and the weather in Lithuania myself, so I understand that sometimes you just have to vent about how hard things can be here. I get it. I do. There’s still a lot of work to do before we have a comprehensive Holocaust education program and a more tolerant society in Lithuania. Interestingly enough though, you hear **the very same thing** from educators in the United States.

Still, US programs aside, I have noticed that for the last couple of years the only viewpoints about Holocaust education in Lithuania known outside the region are the vitriolic ones. I think that the reason for this is because these views are the only consistent ones found in the English-speaking, non-academic media.

Dovid Katz and Efraim Zuroff are two of the most well-known voices at this end of the spectrum, as they

have a considerable media and web presence that they take great care to sustain. (Although, they aren't the only ones).

That's fine, that's what the internet is for—and I have *nothing* against these people personally — but they are, in fact, only *one* perspective.

I, respectfully, see things somewhat differently from them.



A lecturer gives a Holocaust education seminar at one of the schools in Lithuania.

Anyone can disagree with me, of course, but I have been researching this topic for almost a decade, including almost two years of in-country anthropological research conducted predominantly in Lithuania with hundreds of people from all over the country working at all levels, in all professions: politicians, researchers, NGO workers, teachers, professors, students, historians, journalists, lawyers, parents. I've briefed diplomats. I've presented at academic conferences. I've published book chapters. I've actually be on the inside of most of the events these guys criticize from the outside. I've talked to survivors and their families. I've touched Timothy Snyder (okay, that doesn't really mean anything, but I just wanted to make all the historians jealous). What's more important, I came into this research as someone who was incredibly skeptical and highly critical of Lithuania. However, once I got here, I realized that things were *a lot* more complicated and nuanced than I could have ever imagined.

Because of this, I have absolutely no problem readily admitting that *I don't know everything*. Far from it! This is why I think it's time for another voice to provide a different perspective for people to consider.

The state of Holocaust education in Lithuania? It's complicated. You have *no* idea.... And yes, we still have a long way to go politically, culturally, and educationally.



## Lithuanian Teacher Training Trip to Poland 2012

Yet, one thing I can say with a fair amount of certainty, after a decade of research, I have yet to uncover a vast conspiracy, a secret cabal, or a massive campaign of obfuscation.

Believe me, I WISH I had found some kind of scandal. Do you know how many BOOKS I could sell if I had found a sexier story?!?! Instead, I will probably have to content myself with the fact that probably only a small community of academics (and my parents) will ever buy a copy of my dissertation once it's published.

Oh well. I feel pretty okay with that because I consider my "reward" to be the fact that I have come across some pretty amazing, dedicated, and inspiring people here who work tirelessly and passionately to develop Holocaust and tolerance education in schools. If no one reads my book, fine. At least I know that Lithuania is making progress, and there are people here working to make sure that continues. That's why they don't have time to keep up an online presence to talk about their work. They're too busy doing it....

Stay tuned....

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