

Julia Lange

German-American Heritage Museums and the Representation of the World Wars: A Case Study of the DANK Haus Museum in Chicago

German-American heritage museums and their representational politics have so far received only scant scholarly attention. This is especially true with regard to the discursive construction of the two world wars. Although a few, mostly journalistic, articles on German-American museums have indeed been published,¹ these mostly abstain from analyzing the exhibition spaces from a critical vantage point and rather tend to advertise the respective museums as valuable and long-due additions to the American cultural landscape.²

This paper aims to contribute towards closing this research lacuna by means of a case study on one of the largest and best-noted German-American heritage museums in the United States: the DANK Haus German American Cultural Center in Chicago, Illinois. By closely investigating the discursive and framing strategies at work in the permanent exhibition I intend to shed light on the problematic emplotment of history at this German-American site of memory.

Ethnic museums function as media of collective memory that collect (and hence select), preserve, and disseminate knowledge about the collective experience of ethnic groups to a larger public. Mediating between the collective past and the present, they simultaneously reflect, stabilize and also actively shape (local) ethnic collective identity by offering meaningful narratives about the ethnic group's past to their visitors.³ In our present moment driven by competitive identity politics,⁴ ethnic museums participate in managing the public image of minorities in the public sphere and act as potential purveyors of ethnic pride.⁵

This paper essentially explores three related questions. First, which narratives about the First and Second World War does the DANK Haus museum

promote in its permanent exhibition? Second, do these narratives about the war privilege narratives on German-American contributions to the war effort or do they rather emphasize the discrimination experienced by German Americans as an ethnic group during the war years? And, third, if the latter, how exactly is a German-American or, more broadly, a German victim status claimed in the exhibition—solely on the basis of the discrimination experienced by German ethnics on U.S. territory or by a transnationally inflected approach that also includes selected histories from across the Atlantic?

The DANK Haus German American Cultural Center is located at 4740 N. Western Avenue on the North Side of the city of Chicago (fig. 1). It is situated in the Lincoln Square community area, a traditionally German neighborhood that has lost much of its ethnic distinctiveness in recent times. Many German restaurants and other originally German businesses located in the area have shut down throughout the past decades and what consequently remains of a once heavily German-influenced neighborhood are to a large extent traces, i.e., lingering relics and signs that point at a forsaken German origin they no longer actively embody—signifiers emptied of their signifieds so to speak.⁶ The most recent example of the demise of German establishments in the neighborhood is the closing of the popular Brauhaus on 4732 N. Lincoln Avenue in 2017, just across the street from the DANK Haus German American Cultural Center. Having been saved from sale in 2003, the latter is now one of the few still intact German-American institutions in the area.

DANK Haus is operated by the Chicago North chapter of the German American National Congress,⁷ a German-American umbrella organization founded in Chicago in 1959 with the primary intention of uniting German Americans in the mid-West and beyond, preserving their interests, fighting anti-German propaganda, fostering and preserving the German language, culture, and customs, promoting friendship between America and German-speaking lands as well as strengthening cooperation between German-American societies of all couleurs.⁸ The German American National Congress purchased the building at 4740 N. Western Avenue, designed by German-born architect Paul Gerhardt and completed in 1927, as its headquarters in 1967.⁹ Today, DANK Haus essentially serves as a German-American community center offering language classes for children and adults as well as other leisure activities and educational events such as film screenings, concerts, lectures, cooking classes, monthly Stammtisch nights, and seasonal festivities like Oktoberfest. It also houses a library, an art gallery for rotating exhibits, and some impressive historic rooms that can be rented for special occasions. Notably, DANK Haus also runs a museum on the fourth of the building's six floors. The permanent exhibition titled "Lost German Chicago" was put in place in 2009.¹⁰ It is dedicated to preserving the local German heritage by showcasing



Fig. 1. DANK Haus German American Cultural Center, front view

“art, artifacts and memorabilia reflecting the Chicago German community over the years.”¹¹ A companion piece to the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition was issued under the same title in 2009.¹² At the end of 2017, the exhibition was partially overhauled due to the creation of a new position of a museum and archives’ curator. Whereas access to the DANK museum was previously restricted to Saturdays from 11am to 3pm, opening times have recently been expanded. The museum is now open to the public from Monday to Friday from 1pm to 5pm.

The self-stated goal of the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition is to “shed light on the lost history and heritage of the millions of Chicagoans who made up the German community.”¹³ The exhibition is thematically organized and does not follow a strict chronology. In principle, visitors are encouraged to roam freely through the museum space. However, since there is only one entrance that simultaneously serves as the exit to the exhibition, a circular itinerary is, in fact, inscribed into the exhibition’s topography. The collection is made up of artifacts that either directly belong to DANK or were entrusted to the organization with the museum in mind. The exhibition stretches over two large rooms and predominantly consists of photographs, posters, and other material objects reflective of Chicago’s German-American history. Advertised highlights include

[e]xquisite wood carvings dedicated to the Germania Club by the Oscar Mayer family / Relics from the Deutsches Haus at the Columbian Exposition / Hessen Verein standards / Items from Dozen of restaurants including the original Red Star Inn, Schulien's Math Iglar's Casino, the Golden Ox, among others / Memories of St. Boniface Church / Delicatessen Meyer / FC Hansa (German soccer club) / The Schiller Liedertafel / Schoenhofen Brewery / Lincoln Park Turner Hall.¹⁴

The exhibition also features a considerable number of artifacts and photographs from German-American organizations such as DANK Chicago, the Germania Club, Rheinischer Verein, and German-American choirs.

The "Lost German Chicago" exhibition consists of various sections only two of which explicitly carry titles, namely the "The Beer Riots," and "The Haymarket Affair." The majority of the display items are arranged into thematic groups without being subsumed under a larger category.¹⁵ Artifacts that deal with the topic of the world wars are mostly grouped together and displayed in the second room of the exhibition space. Tellingly, this section does not carry an overriding title and hence remains thematically undefined at first glance. Moreover, quite a few artifacts similarly connected to the war years are interspersed into the larger exhibition structure and can be found in content sections like the one covering the timeline of German migration, for instance.

In the following, some of the more troubling aspects in the exhibition's representational politics will be examined. For this purpose, and since the examples could, in fact, be plentiful, the analysis will be restrained to a limited number of displayed artifacts that address the histories of the First or Second World War in a disturbing way.

A problem affecting the entire exhibition is a general lack of contextualizing information. Many of the items are displayed with only very little—and at times none at all—accompanying textual descriptions. With regard to artifacts that are connected to the two world wars the absence of basic historical information is particularly disconcerting, since their discursive framing frequently results in a celebratory take on the German or, more specifically, German-American war past. By withholding references to the larger sociopolitical circumstances of the time, and especially the fatal role of the German state in causing and perpetuating the two conflicts of 1914–18 and 1933–45,¹⁶ the exhibition ultimately promotes a revisionist approach to German and German-American history.

An example that illustrates this general criticism is a collection of war memorabilia of the "Verein Deutscher Weltkriegsveteranen Chicago" (German World War Veterans' Club Chicago, my transl.). The arranged group of

objects includes a drum and a pennant saying “Verein Deutscher Weltkriegsveteranen Chicago. 1914/18. 1939/45. Trommler- und Pfeiffercorps,” a German WWI military lyra, a highly ornamented ceremonial mace, a woven flag saying “Zum Andenken an den Weltkrieg. 1916,” a military cap with a short note stating “Uniform Hat, World War I Veterans, Gustav Zerkowski collection / Loaned by Paula Hebble,” as well as a historical sign reading “Deutscher-Krieger-Verein von Chicago. Gegründet am 8. Dezember 1874. Versammlung: jeden 2. Sonntag im Monat, Vereinslokal: 1958 Roscoe St. Ecke Damen Ave.”¹⁷ Next to it, a traditional spiked helmet of the Prussian military, a so-called *Pickelhaube*, sits in a showcase. Right above it, visitors can see a photograph attached to the wall that depicts a soldier wearing a *Pickelhaube* and holding a ceremonial mace reminiscent of the ones displayed in the exhibition (fig. 2). It is remarkable that this collection of artifacts is not accompanied by an explanatory text. In other words, no contextualizing information is given to the viewer as to the (violence of the two) wars themselves and how and why those who now self-identify as German Americans had participated in them.¹⁸ Instead, visitors are confronted with items and images that fetishize war experiences, glorify German war veterans, and celebrate the pride some German Americans evidently took and continued to take in their personal history as former members of the German army even after their emigration to the United States. Differently put, a highly celebra-



Fig. 2. Collection of war memorabilia

tory approach that is altogether uncritical of the German military past is put on display at DANK Haus.

This celebratory approach towards the German war effort also manifests in a photograph that is displayed in close proximity to the collection of war memorabilia described above. The photograph carries a caption which reads as follows:

Umzug, Riverview Park, 1964[.] The World War Veterans are pictured here in a memorial parade at Riverview Amusement Park. The club carries the German flag, United States flag, City of Chicago flag, along with the club's flag. The new marchers are recently immigrated German soldiers from WWII.

Once again, no information as to how these German World War II soldiers were implicated in the war is given. Instead, viewers are provided with images displaying the pride German émigrés took in their participation in the Second World War as Wehrmacht soldiers—a pride that was evidently experienced even long after the war had ended.

Another problematic image with an uncritical approach towards the German military past that is presented in the exhibition is a birthday card which, as the short accompanying text explains, had been given to a World War I veteran by the Verein Deutscher Weltkriegsveteranen Chicago on the occasion of his birthday. The card features a poem titled “Der Frontsoldat”—a poem that essentially celebrates and eulogizes the strength and persistence of German soldiers. In other words, yet another item in the exhibition that glorifies German war-time efforts.

Undoubtedly, the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition’s curatorial strategy is based on strategic framing—and, more specifically, strategic omission of critical and compromising information—that aims at increasing public recognition and social prestige for German Americans as an ethnic group. To achieve this objective, the exhibition builds on two discourses. One is a contributionist discourse that emphasizes German achievements and contributions to the development of American society. The other is a victimization discourse that promotes a German and German-American victim status and thereby aims to raise public esteem for German Americans as an ethnic group. As historian Charles S. Maier pointed out in a publication from the year 1993, modern American politics had become “a competition for enshrining grievances.”¹⁹ In other words, the rules of the game as to how social capital was claimed and accrued by groups in the United States had shifted. According to Maier, groups defined by categories of race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation were now vying with each other for the status of the

most marginalized collective with the aim of gaining public recognition and, in some cases, financial compensation for past grievances. One of the obvious downsides to this shift in the playbook of identity politics was that the competition for victimhood among social groups, in turn, created a hierarchy of suffering which was highly undesirable and dubious from an ethical standpoint, of course.

The “Lost German Chicago” exhibition at DANK Haus inscribes itself into the larger public discourse on victimhood by featuring multiple narratives in which German-American victimization experiences during the First World War are at stake. For instance, the exhibition features a photograph depicting eight children standing in front of a sign saying “Danger!! To Pro-Germans. Loyal Americans Welcome to Edison Park.” The accompanying text explains:

EDISON PARK, 1917. These children are inspecting a homemade sign admonishing German sympathizers to stay away. Soon restrictions that carried the force of law would be enacted. German aliens were prohibited from traveling through areas doing vital war work, including the stockyards, steel mills and the loop.

The photograph, in combination with the explanatory text, promotes a narrative that casts German ethnics as victims of discriminatory practices in the United States during the First World War.²⁰ Although it is perfectly legitimate and even imperative to discuss the discriminatory practices against German Americans during the First World War, the image still works eerily in the overall context of the museum exhibition as will become clear in the course of this paper. For the moment, it is sufficient to note that the photograph forms part of a larger discursive strategy at work in the exhibition that operates on the basis of a one-dimensional and one-sided representation of the history of the two world wars. More precisely, the exhibition produces a distorted notion of transatlantic history as it refrains from embedding narratives of anti-German discrimination in a wider explanatory framework, i.e. one that would, in this case, acknowledge the German Empire’s role in causing, perpetuating, and aggravating the conflict of 1914–18.²¹ Instead of such a historically balanced approach to history writing, the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition trades in narratives that either exclusively focus on German-American suffering during the First World War or, alternatively, glorify German military strength without any acknowledgement of Germany’s responsibility for the war.

Interestingly, for the Second World War no comparable explicit victim status is claimed in the exhibition. This is indeed rather surprising as quite a

number of German enemy aliens, including a few American citizens of German descent, had been interned during and after the Second World War on U.S. territory. Since stories about the internment of German nationals and German Americans had been gradually brought to public attention starting from the early 1990s, it is remarkable that this chapter of German-American history is not included in the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition—not least so, since the city of Chicago actually had its own temporary detention facility at 4800 Ellis Avenue used for German detainees who were awaiting their final orders.²²

In contrast, in the context of the Second World War the exhibition rather foregrounds a contributionist discourse as evidenced by the display of images that testify to the patriotic behavior of German Americans in Chicago. For instance, the exhibition features a photograph of the Women’s Germania Red Cross Unit from 1944. In conjunction with its accompanying text, the photograph emphasizes German-American women’s contributions towards the war effort and, in passing, reinforces the notion of a German-American community under threat from anti-German sentiment by referencing and thus recalling suspicions of disloyalty directed at German Americans during the First World War:

Still sensitive from WWI suspicion of loyalty to the United States, many German American associations demonstrated their patriotism through public service. The ‘Women’s Germania Red Cross Unit’ was organized prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Focusing on Humanitarian efforts such as preparing bandages, care packages and answering soldiers [*sic*] letters, they displayed their loyalty to country through compassion and dedication to service within their community.

The accompanying text reinforces the notion that German-American associations in Chicago had unfailingly supported the war effort in spite (or because) of being subject to lingering suspicions of disloyalty from American majority society. Again, an opportunity to draw a more balanced and differentiated picture of Chicago’s German-American community, which would have crucially included narratives on pro-Nazi groups in the run-up to and during the Second World War, had been dismissed from the exhibition concept.

Another discursive strategy through which the DANK-Haus’ permanent exhibition strives to raise the “symbolic capital”²³ and hence the visitor’s appreciation of German Americans in Chicago is by sharing stories that are built on a binary logic and emphasize the “good German(s)” who actively

fought fascism in contradistinction to the “evil Nazis.” In accordance with the exhibition’s overall politico-ideological thrust, narratives on pro-Nazi leanings amongst German Americans and the existence of organizations in Chicago that fervently supported National Socialism in Germany such as the Friends of New Germany (*Bund der Freunde des Neuen Deutschland*)—a nation-wide organization which, though headquartered in New York, had a strong presence in Chicago where it was originally founded in 1933—are completely missing in the exhibition. National Socialism is thus firmly and conveniently relegated to the other side of the Atlantic.

Two examples to illustrate this point should suffice. The first example concerns four photographs depicting a zeppelin floating above the grounds of the World’s Fair, which was hosted by the city of Chicago in 1933. The accompanying text to the images states:

ZEPPELIN VISIT, 1933. Captain Hugo Eckener’s visit to Chicago during the 1933 World’s Fair was surrounded by controversy. The German governments [*sic*] demand that the swastika be displayed drew loud protest from all corners of Chicago. Captain Eckener, a Nazi opponent, flew the zeppelin in a wide circuitous path to keep the swastika, painted on one side, toward the lake so as few people as possible would see it.

By focusing on Hugo Eckener, manager of the *Luftschiffbau Zeppelin* during the inter-war years and an outspoken anti-Nazi, the exhibit privileges a narrative about a “good German” who took a firm stance against German fascism and acted accordingly. Although the facts related about Eckener’s zeppelin visit are historically accurate, their selective framing works towards a biased representation of the conflict of 1933–45. First of all, a prominent Nazi opponent is chosen as a subject of interest and celebrated accordingly as a hero defying the German government’s orders. What is not mentioned, however, is that representatives of the German Reich did also attend the world’s fair in Chicago in 1933 so that German National Socialists were indeed present and visible in the city in 1933. The exhibition, in contrast, insinuates that Chicago was a quasi Nazi-free zone replete with fervent opponents of the National Socialist regime. The explicit mention of the “loud protest from all corners of Chicago” as a response to the German government’s demand of the swastika display underscores the exhibition’s emphasis on narratives that convey an uncontroversial image of Chicago’s civil society as one that firmly opposed National Socialism. What is albeit silenced in this narrative is that pro-Hitler groups did indeed exist and made their voices heard during Eckener’s visit.²⁴ As historian Cheryl Ganz points out, at a reception held at the fair-

grounds following the airship's landing, "a storm of dissension [was] raging among the anti-Hitler and pro-Hitler groups of the city's 600,000 German Americans."²⁵ Notably, "only six of Chicago's altogether five hundred German American societies gave their support to the evening event"²⁶ in honor of Eckener's zeppelin flight—an event that stirred controversy due to the attendance of pro-Nazi German ambassador Hans Luther and the accompanying display of Nazi insignia. In view of the fact that pro-Nazi groups in Chicago like the Friends of the New Germany mostly consisted of recent German immigrants and younger German Americans—older German Americans as well as second- and third-generation German Americans, including the official German Group of the World's Fair, were in their majority unfavorably disposed towards Germany's National Socialist government—DANK's selective story-telling is not only deeply perturbing but also incomprehensible. The curatorial strategy of representing a distorted German-American history is, at the end of the day, not only detrimental to the exhibition concept but inevitably also to the reputation of the DANK Haus as an institution—much more so, for sure, than it would have been to acknowledge the existence of a comparatively small but still not negligible percentage of pro-Hitler supporters among German Americans in Chicago in the 1930s.

Equally problematic is the fact that the four photographs, in combination with the explanatory text, set up a binary opposition that firmly distinguishes between an innocent German-American and a National Socialist past that played out across the Atlantic in Europe. On U.S. territory, so the exhibition's underlying message, only protest against German fascism could manifest in the public sphere; in contrast, it was in Europe where Nazism took hold and spread—with the United States, or at least the German-American community of Chicago, supposedly being immune to these ideological aberrations. The fact that pro-Nazi sympathizers did indeed exist in the United States including Chicago, as pointed out above, is altogether omitted from the exhibition's narrative. Moreover, the fact that Chicago actually housed the headquarters of one of the earliest National Socialist organizations in America, namely the Free Society of Teutonia (founded in Detroit in 1924) which was the forebear of the Friends of the New Germany, is equally never mentioned in the exhibition.²⁷ Via its curatorial policy, DANK Haus negates the Chicago German-American community's responsibility to also remember these darker chapters in its own ethnic history and instead opts for a usable past designed to elevate the German-American group's standing. Driven by this identity political agenda, it is perhaps unsurprising but still deeply disturbing that pro-Nazism on American soil is simply dismissed as a phenomenon wholly unrelated to German-American ethnic affairs. The notion of *Anerkennung via Aufarbeitung*, i.e., of gaining reputation via a self-critical working through of

the past, as practiced by the German government with its official state policy of *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* (i.e., coming to terms with the past) in more recent times, is not, as could have been done, adopted and adapted to the German-American context by DANK in its cultural center.

The impression of a selective approach towards the writing of local German-American history is reinforced by the display of an advertising poster for the German Village at the 1933 World's Fair and its accompanying text in which anti-Nazi opposition on the part of German Americans is once more highlighted:

SHEET MUSIC, 1933. For the 1933 World's Fair, organizers chose an Alpine theme for the German Village. In keeping with its theme of modernity, the complex showcased an outdoor ice skating rink in summer. A pro-Nazi group was allowed to speak at the World's Fair opening ceremonies, but fair overseers and organizers, Otto Schmidt and Willem DeVry, who were Germania club Presidents, threatened them with arrest if they displayed the swastika banner.

By stressing the intervention of the presidents of the Germania Club,²⁸ a once prominent social club in Chicago that was founded in 1865, admitted only Americans of German descent and dissolved in 1986 due to financial problems and a loss in membership, the image of good German Americans who firmly opposed Nazism is reinforced. Since the visitor is left in the dark as to whether the mentioned "pro-Nazi group" was based in America and hence a German-American organization, the image of an innocent German-Americana is upheld. However, historical records point to the fact that it was indeed a German-American organization that spoke at the World's Fair opening, namely the Midwest Bund of the Friends of New Germany under the leadership of Fritz Gissibl.²⁹ It is striking that this fact is withheld and not recounted in the episode about the world fair's opening ceremonies. The result of this chosen narrative strategy is obviously problematic, since an image of an innocent German-American community in Chicago is preserved at the expense of historical accuracy. Moreover, the terms "Nazi" and "German" are clearly differentiated in the exhibition and never intermingle or collocate, whereby the fact that National Socialism as a political movement developed in German-speaking lands and that most "Nazis" were indeed German or of German descent is denied. Moreover, the history of the Germania Club is not all that fair and unproblematic as is made to appear in the exhibition. After all, one of Chicago's largest pro-Nazi assemblies that drew roughly 1000 participants was held at the Germania Club in Lincoln Square in February 1938.³⁰

Moreover, the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition promotes the topos of the art- and book-loving German (soldier) who was drafted into the Reich’s army without any particular inclination to participate in the war as it appears—a victim of the circumstances of the time so to speak. This notion is perpetuated via the display of a material object, namely the book *Enemies Are Human Too* by Reinhold Pabel,³¹—which was translated and distributed in four different languages, versions of which are displayed at DANK Haus—and a few accompanying press articles on Pabel and his extraordinary life. *Enemies Are Human Too* relates Pabel’s POW experience as an Africa Corp Veteran who was captured and sent to a POW camp outside of Joliet, Illinois, from where he escaped in 1945. Pabel’s memoir further elaborates on his under-cover life in the United States where he worked various jobs, including one at the Chicago Tribune, before setting up his own used bookstore on Chicago’s Northside, his ultimate apprehension by the FBI in 1952 that led to his being taken into custody, followed by his forced expulsion from U.S. territory, his subsequent legal return to the United States six months later and, last but not least, his final return to Germany in 1967 where he opened two antiquarian bookstores in the city of Hamburg. Since no other example of a German POW is given, Pabel’s life story is not put into perspective and consequently acquires the status of an exemplary German prisoner of war in Illinois. The fact that numerous sympathizers of the National Socialist regime, including high-ranking Nazi officers, had also been captured and brought to the United States as POWs is not mentioned in the exhibition;³² hence no corrective narrative that would have counteracted Pabel’s life account and shed a more differentiated light on German POWs is offered at DANK Haus. On the contrary, the curatorial strategy works towards ennobling German soldiers by foregrounding a narrative about an—as Pabel is represented here—essentially book-loving good German businessman. Furthermore, the display of Pabel’s book with the telling title *Enemies Are Human Too* underscores notions of Pabel as a victim of World War II and hints at a larger strategy at work in the exhibition which aims at humanizing the image of the stereotypical “German enemy” as well as creating sympathy for German war suffering, notably without at the same time acknowledging Germany’s responsibility for the war.

The idea of German soldiers of the world wars harboring no particular affinity for the armies they served in, including the ideologies these stood for, is yet reinforced via a display case with four German war-medals from World War I and II. The accompanying text reads: “GERMAN WWI and WWII MEDALS. C 1918. C 1940–45. POW’s would often trade their war medals to their captors as souvenirs in exchange for civilian items.” The medals are thus rhetorically framed as unwanted badges of pride to which captured German soldiers purportedly had no emotional attachment—just like, by

implication, the soldiers harbored no emotional attachment to the ideologies underlying the two world wars, the caption appears to suggest. Much rather, the captured soldiers took a pragmatic attitude, so the text's implication, by devaluing the medals to simple exchange goods in commercial transactions. Zooming out and looking at the display of war memorabilia in the larger context of the "Lost German Chicago" exhibition two different framing strategies can be identified. Whereas the Chicago veterans' club's war memorabilia are fetishized and displayed as objects of veneration that convey a celebratory approach towards the German past, the POW medals are presented as items that have undergone a process of resemiotization, i.e. they have been transformed from sacred objects of veneration and soldierly pride to profane and pragmatic exchange goods. The two differing strategies of displaying war memorabilia may be best explained by looking at their respective former owners. Whereas in the case of the Chicago veterans' club the exhibition evidently aims at paying homage to and celebrating the world war veterans' association, notably without posing critical questions about the veterans' concrete role during the wars, and thus displays the memorabilia as items testifying to the importance and greatness of the club, the war medals serve a different function. By highlighting the medals' resignification, one could argue, the exhibition not only underlines the emotional detachment of German POWs to symbols of German military pride and (the ideologies of) the German nation state these stood for but, in addition, also emphasizes the conversion German prisoners of war underwent after their relocation to the United States, namely from soldiers serving in a foreign army to captives allowed to participate in American (post-)war economy.³³

The various migration movements tied to the history of the Second World War eventually do get explicitly addressed in the "Lost German Chicago" exhibition, albeit in a problematic manner. Visitors touring the museum encounter a panel on the history of German migration to the United States that also covers the time period from 1930-60.³⁴ However, its representation is troubling in many ways, since the narratives propagated in this section tend to privilege discourses in which Germans and German Americans figure as victims of the Second World War rather than as perpetrators or bystanders, i.e. subject positions much more widespread among the German population. The exhibition features narratives about the expulsion of German ethnics from Eastern territories, for instance, in which a German victim status during and after World War II is being claimed, notably without sufficiently explaining that German suffering during and after the Second World War was a direct result of the German government's atrocious warfare and hence Germany's responsibility.

The enactment of the Nuremberg Laws which forced many German Jews into emigration also gets addressed in the exhibition. However, once again, the discursive framing of the event suggests that German Americans—in their entirety—kept a white vest and remained untainted by any form of antisemitism. Any mention of the antisemitic stance of the Friends of New Germany and its successor organization, the German-American Bund under the leadership of Fritz Kuhn, is withheld.³⁵ The narrative that the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition foregrounds instead focuses on a German American residing in Chicago who sponsored two exit visas for a German-Jewish couple at the end of the 1930s.³⁶ German Americans’ entanglement with the Holocaust—a term that is conspicuously absent from the exhibition—is thus framed in heroic terms by highlighting the exemplary conduct of a “good” German American who saved Jews. The obvious alternative would have been to opt for a more balanced representation of local German-American history by also acknowledging the existence of pro-Nazi groups and their antisemitic agenda.³⁷

The “Lost German Chicago” exhibition furthermore features a miniature version of the battleship *Bismarck*, one of the largest battleships ever built by Germany, which formed part of Nazi Germany’s *Kriegsmarine* and was sunk in May 1941. After its sinking, Nazi propaganda reinterpreted the catastrophic outcome of the battle against the Royal Navy as a heroic act of scuttling to conceal the fact of the ship’s inglorious demise. A legend about the *Bismarck*’s heroic self-sacrifice, laden with pathos about its unsurpassed role in battle, was perpetuated by Nazi propaganda and continues to be spread by political radicals to this day.³⁸ The DANK exhibition does not recount the *Bismarck*’s story from a critical vantage point and hence does not reflect on the battleship’s role in the war and its subsequent mythologization. In fact, the sole information given as to the ship in the exhibition are the parameters of its miniature construction: “Schlachtschiff Bismarck. Masstab 1:100. Modellbauer E Lindhardt.”³⁹ In addition, viewers are confronted with a short text and an accompanying photograph of a person who served on the *Bismarck* which is placed right on top of the display case containing the battleship’s miniature model. The text reads as follows:

Bruno Rzonca (1918-2004) was a machinist on the *Bismarck*. He was one of 116 survivors out of a crew of 2,221; and one of a half million Axis prisoners to spend the war in POW camps in the U.S [*sic*] and Canada. / He returned to Germany to find that his hometown in East Prussia now belonged to Poland after the Polish border was moved 200 miles west to the Oder River by the post-war Potsdam Agreements. Millions of Germans were forcibly expelled from their

homes in the east—Rzonca was one of thousands who moved to the United States. / Rzonca moved to the U.S. in 1952 and worked as a machinist in East Chicago and Gary. He died in Crown Point in 2004.

At first glance, the narrative recounted may appear unproblematic. After all, a person survived a ship accident, spent time in confinement as a POW, and was expelled from his hometown in the East before finally finding work and peace in the United States. However, it is striking that the reasons for the sinking of the battleship *Bismarck* and its problematic role in the war as an attack ship are excluded from the narrative. The glorifying term of “survivorship” that is projected onto Rzonca thus becomes questionable once the lens through which his story is told is widened and Rzonca’s fate as a soldier is put into a larger historical perspective.

Interestingly enough, the framing of Rzonca’s story is reminiscent of and, in fact, structurally replicates discourses that were typical of German expellee organizations like the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (BdV) which were routinely subject to academic criticism for their distorted construction of history.⁴⁰ Scholarly critique mostly centered on the issue that in the propounded discourses the expulsion of Germans from Eastern territories was not causally explained as a result of the atrocious warfare of the German National Socialist regime but as a historically isolated event in which Germans were the victims of war. As a consequence, war crimes committed by Germans were de facto equated with crimes committed against Germans. The narrative framing of Rzonca’s life in the exhibition follows the same discursive pattern. By refraining from embedding Rzonca’s war time suffering in the overall context of the Second World War, the exhibition engages in strategic amnesia aimed at increasing compassion and awareness of German war suffering at the expense of a balanced, historically accurate representation of history. The exhibition hence adopts a revisionist tone towards the German past which is highly troubling.

The last item at DANK-Haus to be analyzed in this article is not formally part of the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition but situated in the newly opened, temporary exhibition on the history of the DANK Haus that opened to the public on November 9, 2017. Amidst the manifold material objects displayed in the special exhibition visitors can also find three Bavarian *Dirndl*, that is traditional women’s dresses that have their origin in Austria and the German state of Bavaria. As the accompanying text explains, the display of the dresses is meant to raise awareness for the changes in *dirndl* fashions over time. One of the dresses is a “Souvenir Dirndl from [the] 1972 Olympic Games” held in Munich. Whereas the two explanatory texts, one of them titled “Educational Opportunities,” elaborate on the dresses’ intricate sym-

bolic embroidery connected to the Munich Olympic Games,⁴¹ the abduction and ultimate tragic killing of members of the Israeli team during the Games of 1972, an event which shocked the world at the time and has since been part of global memory, is not acknowledged. Differently put, the curatorial approach implemented at DANK-Haus once again operates on the principle of strategically omitting compromising information that could potentially throw a negative light on the German past and, in this particular case, the thorny issue of Germany's relation with regard to Jewish matters.

It should be noted that when I first visited the DANK-Haus in 2013, the museum had put a diorama of the Olympic village in Munich on display which is not part of the exhibition any longer. The diorama was presented separately from the rest of the exhibition and was not accompanied by any contextualizing information apart from a brief sign saying "Olympiapark München / Munich Olympic Village / 1972." Just like in the new exhibition's sub-section on Bavarian *Dirndl*, the abduction and ultimate tragic death of members of the Israeli Olympic team during the Munich Olympic Games was not mentioned.

In conclusion, the DANK Haus' "Lost German Chicago" exhibition constructs a distorted version of Chicago's German-American past via a selective, cherry-picking approach to history writing. Based on the strategic framing of display items, the exhibition promotes revisionist narratives that relativize German war guilt and the responsibility to remember it. By silencing problematic aspects of both German and German-American history, by marginalizing the extent to which ordinary Germans were structurally implicated as either perpetrators or bystanders in the crimes perpetrated by the National Socialist regime, and by foregrounding narratives that ultimately equate crimes committed by Germans with crimes committed against Germans, the DANK Haus museum engages in an extremely problematic construction of German-American history and identity that asks for a vehement critique.⁴²

A question that inevitably arises after having toured the exhibition is why those responsible for its content opted for precisely such a representational politics regarding the world wars. Differently put, why is the local German-American past whitewashed at the museum? Why is the DANK Haus' approach to historiography diametrically opposed to the German state's discourse of *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*?

The answer is a multidimensional one that probably consists of several interrelated factors. First and foremost, the logic of American identity politics encourages ethnic groups to advertise themselves uncompromisingly in the most favorable light possible. The past is thus put in the service of the present so as to advance a specific group's presentist concerns, interests and visions for the future. Consequently, narratives considered compromising and counter-

productive to the aim of furthering the group's societal standing are strategically excluded from collective public self-representations.

Secondly, this general logic of American identity politics also underlies the agenda of ethnic museums in the United States that serve as "points of crystallization"⁴³ (Assmann) of specific collective identities, i.e., as sites of memory that mediate and simultaneously shape the memories of and about specific ethnic groups.⁴⁴ German-American museums are no exception in this regard.

Third, quite a few German-American leaders of the (post-)war generation who initiated or helped develop some of the larger German-American museums have over decades repeatedly lamented the dissemination of anti-German sentiment and propaganda via American media outlets and U.S. popular culture. With their lamentos, they inscribed themselves into a larger German-American jeremiadic tradition: In the aftermath of the Second World War, and especially in the late 1970s and 1980s, German-American organizations like the German-American National Congress (DANK), for instance, spoke of a veritable defamation campaign at work in U.S. media and culture which they frequently linked to the rise in Holocaust remembrance that gained in momentum in the third quarter of the 20th century in the United States.⁴⁵ It may thus be reasonably assumed that quite a few of the larger German-American museums that started opening from the mid-1990s were also meant to function as platforms for disseminating counter-narratives to the (perceived) dominant negative representation of Germans in the American public sphere. In other words, German-American museums like the DANK Haus museum were likely founded with the double goal of, first, retrieving a forgotten or "lost" ethnic past but also, second, of presenting counter-histories to the dominant negative discourses on Germany and its past.⁴⁶ Understood in this vein, it is not all that surprising that the "Lost German Chicago" exhibition looks the way it does.

However, fourth and finally, considering the comparatively recent generational shifts in leadership at DANK Haus it is possible that an alternative strategy regarding the representation of the German-American past will soon be implemented at the museum. As is to be hoped, this revised approach will draw on and creatively adapt the German state's policy of *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung*—a policy which has already served as a model for other states' coming to terms with the "dark" chapters of their national pasts and consequently turned into, as it were, successful German export article.⁴⁷

*Universität Hamburg
Hamburg, Germany*

Notes

¹ See, for example, Don Heinrich Tolzmann, *German-Americana. Selected Essays* (Milford, OH: Little Miami Pub. Co., 009), 187–197; Ansgar Grow, “Reif fürs Museum: Amerikas deutsches Erbe,” *Die WELT*, August 21, 2011, accessed September 26, 2018, <https://www.welt.de/print/wams/reise/article13556558/Reif-fuers-Museum-Amerikas-deutsches-Erbe.html>; Nathaniel Koch, “In Chinatown, the spirit of German immigrants,” *The Washington Post*, August 3, 2017, accessed September 26, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/life-style/magazine/in-chinatown-the-spirit-of-german-immigrants/2017/08/01/d0762e1c-632c-11e7-8adc-fea80e32bf47_story.html?utm_term=.4f314bfb1bf9a.

² Marc Fisher’s article in the *Washington Post* on the opening of the German-American Heritage Museum of the U.S.A. (GAHMUSA) in March 2010—a museum operated by the German-American Heritage Foundation of the U.S.A. that advertises itself as a national German-American museum representing German-Americana from coast to coast—is one of the exceptions to the rule. Fisher’s article is essentially a critique of the increasing “balkanization” of the commemorative landscape in the U.S. capital. However, he also points out the shortcomings of GAHMUSA’s curatorial approach by observing that the history of the German-American Bund is not mentioned in the permanent exhibition; see Marc Fisher, “German-American Heritage Museum promotes culture, doesn’t tell whole story,” *The Washington Post*, March 20, 2010, accessed September 26, 2018, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/03/19/AR2010031904949.html>. The German magazine *Der Spiegel* and the weekly newspaper *Die ZEIT* also devoted articles to the opening of GAHMUSA in which the lack of a critical reassessment of German-American immigration history is equally, however briefly, problematized; see Gregor Peter Schmitz, “Deutsches Museum in Washington. Ick war ein Berliner,” *Spiegel Online*, March 30, 2010, accessed September 26, 2018, <http://www.spiegel.de/reise/staedte/deutsches-museum-in-washington-ick-war-ein-berliner-a-686241.html>; Martin Klingst, “Alles außer Lederhosen,” *ZEIT Online*, April 29, 2010, accessed September 26, 2018, <https://www.zeit.de/2010/18/Interview-Museum>. For another, more detailed, critical assessment of GAHMUSA, particularly its representational politics concerning the Second World War, see Julia Lange, *Herman the German: Das Hermann Monument in der deutsch-amerikanischen Erinnerungskultur* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2013), 106–8.

³ For a succinct overview of the function and specific potential of museums as media of collective memory, see Martin Roth and Gilbert Lupfer, “Museen,” in *Gedächtnis und Erinnerung. Ein interdisziplinäres Handbuch*, eds. Christian Gudehus, Ariane Eichenberg, and Harald Welzer (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2010), 171–6; on the construction of history in museums, see Aleida Assmann, “Konstruktion von Geschichte in Museen,” *APuZ Auf Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 49 (2007): 6–13.

⁴ On more recent dynamics in contemporary American identity politics and its relation to today’s “memory boom,” see Jay Winter, “The Generation of Memory: Reflections on the ‘Memory Boom’ in Contemporary Historical Studies,” *GHI Bulletin* 27 (Fall 2000): 69–92.

⁵ Cf. Steven Conn, “Melting Pots, Salad Bowls, Ethnic Museums, and American Identity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of American Immigration and Ethnicity*, ed. Ronald H. Berger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 479–85.

⁶ Interestingly enough, in spite of the disappearance of German establishments such as the Golden Ox, Zum Deutschen Eck, and Heidelberger Fass in the Lincoln Square area in the 1980s and 1990s, German-inspired food has become en vogue in the new millennium as indicated by the opening of several German restaurants and bars in trendy Chicago neighborhoods such as Wrigleyville. Austrian-style cafés, Christmas markets, and neighborhood Oktoberfests have lately also been on the rise in Chicago. Moreover, concerted efforts to preserve Lincoln Square’s ethnic flavor have been made by German-American community leaders such as Eugene Schuler, alderman of the 47th Ward. For instance, Schuler was instrumental in bringing

a section of the Berlin Wall to Chicago which was installed at the Western Brown Line CTA station, not far from DANK Haus, in 2008. See Joseph C. Heinen and Susan Barton Heinen, *Lost German Chicago* (Mount Pleasant, S.C.: Arcadia Publishing, 2009), 119.

⁷ The abbreviation DANK is derived from the organization's name in German, namely Deutsch-Amerikanischer National Kongress.

⁸ See "History" section of the DANK website: <http://www.dank.org/history/>.

⁹ On November 4, 2017 DANK commemorated the building's 90th anniversary with a special event that also encompassed two lectures and a special exhibition honoring Paul Gerhardt, the building's German-born architect. DANK's headquarters is still housed on the second floor of the building today.

¹⁰ See "Museum" section of the DANK website: <https://www.dankhaus.com/Museum/>.

¹¹ "Educator's Guide to Lost German Chicago at the Dank Haus German Cultural Center," n.d., n.p., accessed, September 23, 2018, <https://www.dankhaus.com/Resources/Documents/LGCEDUCATORSGUIDEGRADESCOOL.pdf>.

¹² Heinen and Heinen, *Lost*.

¹³ "Educator's Guide."

¹⁴ <https://www.dankhaus.com/Museum/>.

¹⁵ The official educator's guide to the "Lost German Chicago" exhibition, which can be downloaded on the internet, proposes that the "artifacts found in the Lost German Chicago exhibit can be categorized into several themes. They are: Beginnings—the immigrant experience coming to America, Religion and Education, Beer Brewing, German Businesses Large and Small, Leisure and Recreation, War and Reaction, Germania and other German Clubs. Artifacts in the exhibit also highlight the following historic events: Haymarket Bombing / Columbian Exhibition of 1893 (World's Fair);" see "Educator's Guide."

¹⁶ The long-standing academic controversy over the German Empire's role in causing the First World War has lately gained new currency due to the centennial of the war's beginning. In this context, Christopher Clark's bestselling *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (London: Allen Lane, 2012) drew much scholarly applause for its focus on the multilateral dimensions of pre-war history but, especially in Germany, also ire from a number of renowned historians such as John C. G. Röhl, Volker Ullrich, Hans-Ulrich Wehler, and Heinrich August Winkler who criticized Clark for his selective use and incomplete citation of historical sources, existing argumentative contradictions, and a revisionist tendency to downplay the German Reich's large share in causing the outbreak of war. For a concise review of the latest publications and the more recent German academic debates on the origins of the First World War and the July Crisis of 1914, see Andreas Rose, Rezension zu: Krumeich, Gerd: Juli 1914. Eine Bilanz. Paderborn 2014 / McMeekin, Sean: July 1914. Countdown to War. New York 2013 / MacMillan, Margaret: The War That Ended Peace. The Road to 1914. London 2013 / Clark, Christopher: Die Schlafwandler. Wie Europa in den Ersten Weltkrieg zog. München 2013 / Otte, Thomas: July Crisis. The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914. Cambridge 2014, *H-Soz-Kult*, July 30, 2014, accessed September 27, 2018, <http://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/rezbuecher-21344>.

¹⁷ Literal translations (my own), in the order as they appear: "German World War Veterans Club Chicago. 1914/18. 1939/45. Drummer and piper corps;" "In memory of the World War. 1916;" "German Warrior Club of Chicago, founded December 8, 1874. Assembly: every second Sunday of the month. Clubhouse: 1958 Roscoe St., at the corner of Damen Ave."

¹⁸ The only indication that museum visitors get as to the provenance of the displayed objects is a short explanatory text below one of the photographs depicting the "world war veterans group, 1950s" in which it is pointed out that the Verein Deutscher Weltkriegsveteranen of Chicago is "a fraternal men's veterans organization" and that the "silver standard" with which they pose in the photograph was "first brought to Chicago for the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893." The underlying, but unspoken, assumption is thus that the war memorabilia

visitors can nowadays see in the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition is precisely the original silver standard featured in the photograph. This oblique inference, which can be drawn by the visitor after consulting all photographs displayed in proximity to the war memorabilia, does not alter the fact that these items, let alone their provenance, are not properly explained or historicized and contextualized in the exhibition. Museum visitors are thus left to draw their own conclusions as to the visual material presented to them, including the function, goals and membership base of the veterans’ club.

¹⁹ Charles S. Maier, “A Surfeit of Memory? Reflections on History, Melancholy and Denial,” *History and Memory* 5/2 (1993): 147.

²⁰ Since it is not explained whether the children in the photograph are of German descent, it is left up to speculation whether they are cast as victims of anti-German propaganda or simply as onlookers of a sign that indicates anti-German discrimination. In any case, the children act as potential figures of identification for museum visitors who are likely to find themselves in the same viewing position as the young people in the picture when studying the intratextual sign and pondering its implications. Moreover, since children conventionally serve as stand-ins for a naive, innocent outlook on reality, visitors are invited to share their defamiliarizing and affective viewpoint on reality, which is here presumably marked by curiosity as well as consternation regarding the warning sign. In other words, museum visitors are encouraged to sympathize, if not directly with those affected by anti-German sentiment, then at least indirectly with contemporary witnesses whose gaze is directed at objects testifying to anti-German measures implemented during the First World War.

²¹ Cf. footnote 16.

²² One of the first full-length books published on the subject of the internment of German enemy aliens was Arnold Krammer’s *Undue Process: The Untold Story of America’s German Alien Internees* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1997). For the Chicago detention facility, see *ibid.*, 87–88.

²³ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 114–20.

²⁴ Cheryl R. Ganz, *The 1933 Chicago World’s Fair: A Century of Progress* (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2012), 145–6.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 146.

²⁷ Cornelia Wilhelm, *Bewegung oder Verein? Nationalsozialistische Volkstumspolitik in den USA* (Stuttgart: Fritz Steiner Verlag, 1998), 41–5.

²⁸ As is explained elsewhere in the exhibition, the archival material and pieces of the art and memorabilia collection of the Germania Club were donated to DANK Chicago after the club’s dissolution. The Germania Club is thus honored with a separate sub-section in the exhibition concept.

²⁹ Ganz, 143.

³⁰ Jeff Nichols, “In 1939 Nazis rallied in Chicago to make Germany great again,” *chicagoreader.com*, March 11, 2016, accessed September 26, 2018, <https://www.chicagoreader.com/chicago/1939-nazi-fascist-rally-chicago-history/Content?oid=21376284>.

³¹ Reinhold Pabel, *Enemies Are Human Too* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston Co., 1955).

³² Derek R. Mallett, *Hitler’s Generals in America: Nazi POW and Allied Military Intelligence* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), see esp. chapters 2 and 4. Moreover, personal accounts by the children of former P.O.W.s who had been interned in Middle America indicate that some P.O.W.s continued to believe in the cause they fought for even long after the war, see Ron Grossman, “Germans fondly recall POW camps in Wildwest,” *chicagotribune.com*, October 7, 2002, accessed September 29, 2018, <http://www.google.de/amp/www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-2002-10-07-0210070179-story,amp.html>.

³³ By implication, the exhibition thus reinforces ideas of American exceptionalism and celebrates the United States as the eponymous land of the free.

³⁴ The panel reads as follows: "1930–1960: War and Immigration / Immigration patterns from 1930 to 1960 were reactions to the Depression and World War II. In the early 1930s, more Germans repatriated back to Germany than immigrated here. In the latter 1930s, immigration spiked as people fled the Nazi regime. Post war immigration was fueled by the 12 million ethnic Germans who were expelled from their homes in eastern Europe."

³⁵ United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, "German American Bund," *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, accessed October 10, 2018, <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-american-bund>; see also Sander S. Diamond, *The Nazi Movement in the United States, 1924–1941* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974), 135–7, 139–43, 235, 239–40, 315, 317–8, 335.

³⁶ The respective panel reads as follows: "A Family's Journey / Enactment of the Nuremberg Laws caused many German Jews to flee their homeland. Josef and Rose Homberg (nee Adler) were some of the last to leave. Shown here are internal and foreign travel passports stamped identifying them as Jews. To receive an American visa, immigrant applicants needed a sponsor; someone in the United States who would take responsibility for finding them housing, and employment. . . . Ledger Sheet of expenses to be paid back to sponsor Ferdinand Falk Hermann, 5323 Byron Street, Chicago."

³⁷ It should be noted that, in contrast to the museum's representational politics, in the companion piece to the exhibition the existence of "few open defenders among Chicago Germans" of the "Adolf Hitler regime" is acknowledged, see Heinen and Heinen, *Lost*, 95.

³⁸ Wilke, H-J. "Mythos des Unterganges: mythologische Elemente im deutschen Faschismus." *Analytische Psychologie* 16 (1985): 114–131.

³⁹ The English translation would be as follows: "Battleship Bismarck. Parameters 1:100. Model constructed by E Lindhardt."

⁴⁰ On the expulsion of the Germans after the Second World War and its functionalization in German collective memory, see Eva und Hans Henning Hahn, *Die Vertreibung im deutschen Erinnern: Legenden, Mythos, Geschichte* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 2010), 514–560; for a brief organizational history of the *Bund der Vertriebenen* (BdV), see Matthias Stickler, "Bund der Vertriebenen (BdV)," *Online-Lexikon zur Kultur und Geschichte der Deutschen im östlichen Europa*, March 27, 2012 (last update), accessed October 15, 2018, <https://ome-lexikon.uni-oldenburg.de/54033.html>.

⁴¹ The two accompanying texts read as follows: "Evolution of the Dirndl / . . . The dirndl in the display case—inspired by the 1972 Munich Olympic Games—is a playful variation on a theme. Note the five interlaced rings embroidered along the bodice that mimic the well-known Olympic symbol. . . .;" "Educational Opportunities / . . . Who would have worn this dress? Likely, young women representing the host city of München / The Olympic hostess Dirndl were blue and white with a touch of Bauhaus design."

⁴² It is particularly worrying to know that DANK Haus is currently implementing a docents program with the intention of offering guided tours at the museum. The revisionist narratives propagated at DANK Haus could thus potentially be reinforced by drawing audiences' attention to specific, ideologically charged display items in the exhibition that may otherwise escape visitors' notice. The museum is hence in urgent need of an overhaul that would crucially entail a rethinking of its representational politics concerning the two world wars. Judging by the DANK Haus' more recent target of establishing an archive for historical German-American newspapers and in light of its already strong educational events' track, this self-imposed task would be highly fitting the institution's current ambitions of deepening its academically-oriented profile.

⁴³ Jan Assmann, "Kollektives Gedächtnis und kulturelle Identität," in *Kultur und Gedächtnis*, eds. Jan Assmann and Tokio Hölzchen (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), 9–19.

⁴⁴ On heritage museums by “white ethnics” in the United States and their tendency to represent the past in a celebratory manner, see Conn, 483–4.

⁴⁵ In fact, the companion piece to the “Lost German Chicago” exhibition contains a photograph depicting a DANK functionary behind a sign saying “End Discrimination NOW. German-American Anti Defamation League.” As the accompanying text with the subject title “German-American Anti Defamation League” explains, the “photograph from the 1970s shows Willy Scharpenberg combatting negative public portrayals of Germans in the media.” Interestingly, this very photograph had not been part of the exhibition when I visited the museum in 2013 and 2017. See Heinen and Heinen, 115.

⁴⁶ In its founding statutes, the German-American National Congress (DANK) explicitly stated that one of its main goals was to “stand up against every slander and defamation of the American and German name, and especially every anti-German propaganda,” see <http://www.dank.org/history>. The nexus between the spread of negative public portrayals of Germans in the media, as perceived and criticized by some German-American leaders, and a rising Holocaust memory culture is also reflected in a more recent controversy about the opening of the German-American Heritage Museum of the U.S.A. in Washington, D.C., in 2010 which has been interpreted by some commentators as a riposte and counter-narrative to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum on the National Mall located only a few blocks away from the former; cf. Klingst, “Alles außer Lederhosen,” and Lange, *Herman the German*, 106.

⁴⁷ Cf. Lily Gardner Feldman, *Germany's Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity* (Lanham, MD: Rowman&Littlefield, 2012).