

he was going to lose, because we had such an overwhelming case against him, he seemed genuinely shocked by the verdict.

It was brought out during the trial that Irving advised a group of his followers in Calgary, Canada: “Mocking survivors...is not enough. You have to be tasteless about it....I am going to form an Association of Auschwitz Survivors, Survivors of the Holocaust and Other Liars: A-S-S-H-O-L-S.” Why do Irving and other deniers intentionally denigrate Holocaust survivors?

Because survivors are easy targets and deniers have no shame.

What makes survivors easy targets?

They're elderly, they're emotional, and sometimes they make mistakes, as anybody would. I was at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum during the shooting on June 10, 2009, and some people say it happened exactly one way and others say it happened exactly another way. How you remember it depends on where you stood and what you heard.

Your defense team did not have Holocaust survivors testify at the trial. Why?

First, we didn't think it was necessary; survivors would have been what's called in legal parlance witnesses of *fact* as opposed to expert witnesses. We took the Holocaust as a given and told the judge we didn't need witnesses of fact to prove that it happened. Second, the issue at hand was not about whether people suffered but whether people were murdered, and except for the killers and those inmates whose job it was to burn the corpses and remove the ashes—the Sonderkommando—there were very few eyewitnesses to the actual murders. We used Sonderkommando testimony in our reports, but none of these individuals were alive at the time of the trial. Third, we feared that if we put Holocaust survivors in the witness box, Irving, acting as his own counsel, might try to confuse them, humiliate them, make them objects of ridicule. And fourth, recognizing that in time all the survivors will pass on, we wanted to prove that the documents alone could tell the story explicitly and undeniably.

Irving charged you and your Jewish supporters with trying to ruin his career. Do deniers like Irving truly believe they are the victims?

They absolutely believe it. Most prejudiced, hating people see themselves as having been victimized, either directly or indirectly. “The Jews own the banks, run the press, control Congress through the Zionist lobby”—those are ways of saying, “They have power that I don't have and I'm a victim.”

After Irving lost the case and his falsifications of history were exposed, a reporter asked him if he'd stop denying the Holocaust and Irving responded, “Good Lord, no.” If that's the case, then what effect did the trial have on Irving?

Irving still goes around denying the Holocaust, because it's the only way he'll get attention, but his reputation has really been hurt. When he's quoted now, he's described as “David Irving, Holocaust denier” or “David Irving, who was described by the court in London as a liar, a falsifier of history.” Many people consider him a pathetic figure.

Is it possible that someone could be a Holocaust denier and not be an anti-Semite?

No, absolutely not. Denial is a form of anti-Semitism.

What's the difference between a “Holocaust denier” and a “Holocaust revisionist”?

The deniers want to be called “revisionists.” They say, “We're not denying; we are just revising mistakes in history, engaging in a legitimate form of historical interpretation.” True, historical revisionism is a legitimate field, if it's not based on lies, distortions, and inventions. Holocaust denial is not a form of revisionism and we should never refer to it as such.

Why are Holocaust deniers such a threat?

They implant doubts in people by raising questions that make them hesitate to believe certain things. For example, a student who chose to take my class, who is in no way a denier,

asked me, “Professor, how do we know the diary of Anne Frank is real? How do we know there really were gas chambers? How do we know that there really were six million?” The deniers' messages seep into the mainstream and create doubts within people who have no idea they are mimicking the assertions of deniers. On the surface such questioning seems perfectly legitimate, even praiseworthy, in academic settings.

What about the damage caused by loose cannons like the man who murdered a guard at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum?

Deniers give them the justification to do what they do. When I was interviewed on CNN right after the shooting, I said, “You've got to differentiate between the ‘suits’ and the ‘shooters.’ There's James Von Brunn, who did the shooting, and then there are the suits, who provide the ideological ammunition.”

What do Holocaust deniers such as Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad hope to gain by denying history?

They hope to delegitimize the State of Israel by saying, “Not only was it a bunch of Europeans coming to the Middle East and kicking us out, but it was based on a lie.” On my website (www.hdot.org) we've created a section in Arabic and Farsi, based on material adjudicated in court, that responds to these denial claims—not to argue with them, but to say, “Here's what they say; here are the facts.”

What actions can we as individuals take against deniers?

The most important things are to learn the facts and to understand the deniers' modus operandi so you're not confused by their arguments.

The battle for memory is becoming a battle for history as the last of the Holocaust survivors are nearing the end of their lives. What is our responsibility to them?

The historian Simon Dubnow said it best when he advised the remaining survivors in the Riga ghetto: “*Yidn, shreibt un fershreibt*,”—“Jews, write it down. And keep writing it down.” □