

Documentary Filmmaking: Intermarried Families In Nazi Germany

Abstract

This research project aims to produce a documentary exploring the experiences of intermarried families in Nazi Germany, focusing on the hardships that these civilians had to overcome in order to survive. The documentary is conducted by a series of oral interviews with historians and scholars, including Julia Torrie and Mark Rosen, who break down the social and political dynamics of intermarriage under the Third Reich. It also shares the powerful story of survivor Margaret Graebert, who reflects on her experiences with intermarriage and the Holocaust. By combining personal narratives with historical analysis, the documentary will provide an in-depth exploration of the struggles faced by intermarried families, the policies enacted against them, and how civilians fought against the Nazi regime. This project seeks to contribute to Holocaust studies by highlighting resistance and survival, emphasizing the role of love and activism during a time of tragedy and loss.

Introduction

The Nazi regime's strict racial policies targeted intermarriage between Jews and non-Jews. Marriage between these couples was banned in 1935 by the Nuremberg Laws, and couples who were already married faced extreme pressure to divorce. They faced widespread ostracization from both their communities and workplaces, with both partners at risk of losing their jobs. For many years, however, Jewish partners were exempt from deportations, in order to prevent protests from non-Jewish family members against the Nazi regime. However, as the war went on, their tolerance eventually faded and the regime began to dissolve protections against intermarriages. On February 27th, 1943, the Gestapo gathered the remaining Jews from their jobs, homes, and off the street, and took them to an assembly point in an attempt to deport the remaining Jews in Berlin. While they were detained, family members awaited their return, until eventually hundreds of German spouses, mostly women, gathered outside the Jewish community center building. Over the next couple of days, groups of up to 200 women protested outside, demanding information about their loved ones as they feared they would be sent to Auschwitz. Throughout the next week, the 2,000 detained Jews were slowly released back to their families. Now known as the Rosenstrasse Protest, this event was the only protest against the deportation of Jews by Germans during the Third Reich. It showcased the power of collective action by women and their successful efforts to save thousands of Jewish men. The protest serves as a testament to the enduring power of solidarity and the crucial role it played in saving lives during the Holocaust. It is crucial to share the stories of survivors and reflect on the hardships intermarried couples endured, ensuring that their experiences are remembered and their resilience is honored, which this documentary aims to do.

Methods

- Led a series of oral interviews with Holocaust survivor Margaret Graebert, gaining insight into her experiences, family history, and hardships during that time.
- Interviewed Dr. Julia S. Torrie, a History Professor at St. Thomas University in Canada, specializing in twentieth-century European social and cultural history.
- Spoke with Mark Roseman, an English historian at Indiana University, focusing on modern Europe and the Holocaust.
- Conducted further historical and digital research, analyzing written accounts of intermarriage experiences in Nazi Germany and the Holocaust.
- Transcribed interview footage for appropriate and accurate captioning.
- Used Davinci Resolve to edit and compile footage and findings into a documentary format.

Visuals



Figure 1. Rosenstrasse Protest, 1943. *United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*.

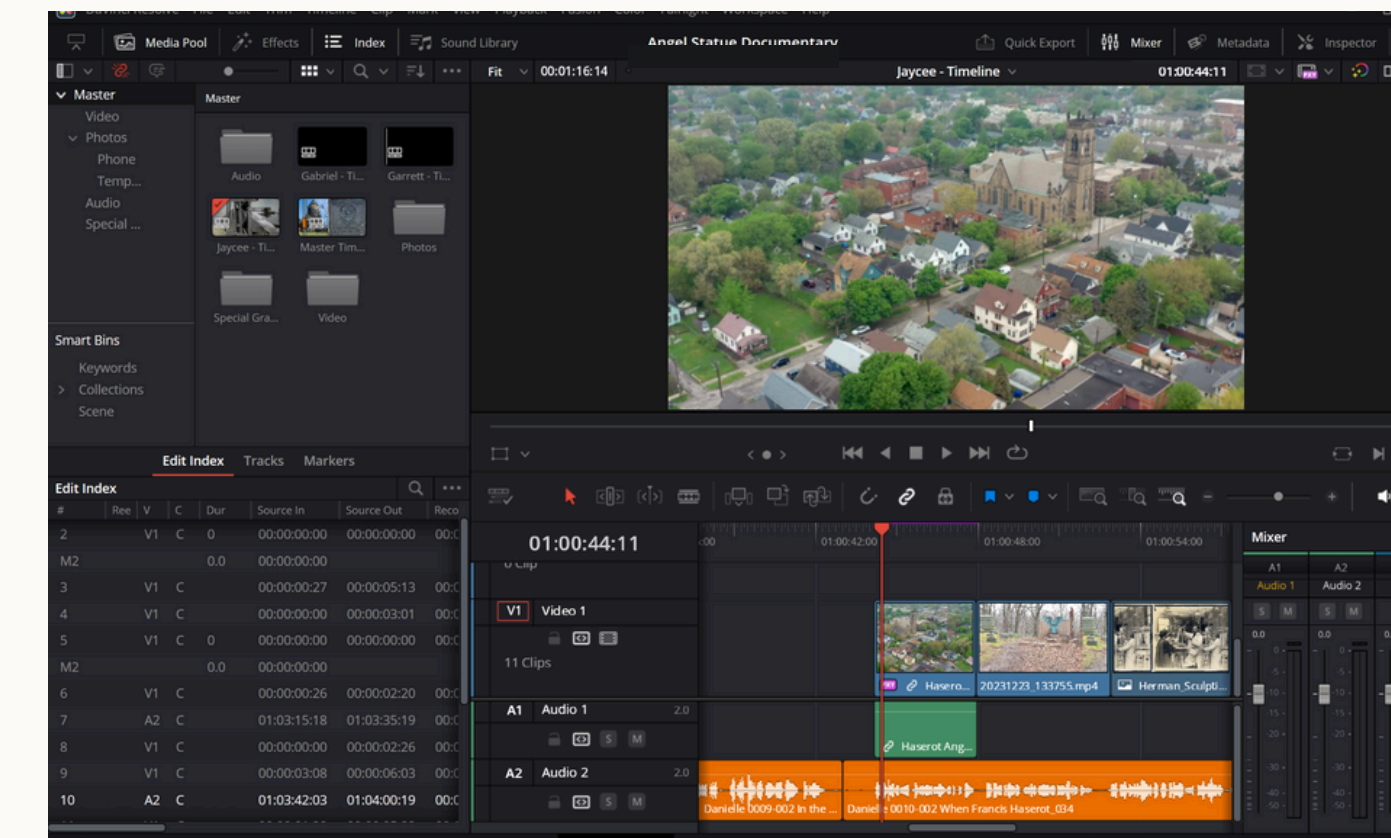


Figure 2. Margot's documentary in the editing process in Davinci Resolve. 2025.



Figure 3. Danielle and Margot. 2023.

Results

Though still in progress, the documentary provides archival materials, historical documents, and expert interviews to create a well-rounded narrative. It highlights the impact of the Rosenstrasse Protest, showing how the collective action of women helped save their Jewish spouses from deportation. By focusing on intermarried families, it offers a unique perspective on resistance, survival, and the complexities of life under Nazi rule. The project is being carefully edited using Davinci Resolve to ensure the research is engaging and accessible to a wider audience.

References

- Jockusch, Laura, and Gabriel N. Finder. Mitigating Persecution: Intermarried Families and the Significance ..., academic.oup.com/hgs/article/38/1/18/7609542. Accessed 5 Mar. 2025.
- Potter, Hilary. Remembering Rosenstrasse: History, Memory and Identity in Contemporary Germany. Peter Lang Ltd, 2018.
- Raggam-Blesch, Michaela. "'privileged' under Nazi-Rule: The Fate of Three Families in Vienna." *Journal of Genocide Research*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, 3 July 2019, [pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6817312/](https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6817312/).
- Shaul, Michal. Full Article: "Doubtful Cases": Intermarried Families in the Post-Holocaust Jewish World, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02619288.2020.1794839. Accessed 6 Mar. 2025.
- Stoltzfus, Nathan. Resistance of the Heart: Intermarriage and the Rosenstrasse Protest in Nazi Germany. Rutgers University Press, 2001.
- United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-rosenstrasse-demonstration-1943. Accessed 28 Feb. 2025.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Gabriel Martinez and Garrett Discala for their collaboration on this project and Margaret Gaebert for sharing her powerful testimony.