ACCESS THE FEATURE
www.unsilence.org/the-son

SUMMARY
The Son is based on interviews with Michael Bauer, the gay son of two Jewish Holocaust survivors. The feature is an interactive transcribed testimony where learners choose their own pathways through Michael’s story.

CONTENT OVERVIEW
Connections from Past to Present
Michael Bauer's story connects his family's Holocaust history with his work as a political activist in the United States. Michael's testimony weaves together his memories of growing up as the child of Jewish Holocaust survivors, his experiences of coming out as gay during the AIDS Crisis of the 1980s, and his work - based in Chicago - advocating for refugees and standing against ongoing oppression and genocide around the world.

AUDIENCES
The Son is recommended for ages 13 and up. The feature is suitable for students and the general public.
TIMING

*The Son* takes approximately 8 minutes to complete. If discussion is integrated within the experience, more time will be needed.

ACTIVITY IDEAS

*Suitable for in-person and distance learning*

**Large Group Experiences**

*The Son* can be implemented as an interactive large group activity where the group votes at each decision point. Each decision point and ‘chapter’ serves as a natural moment for discussion (see Guiding Questions by Chapter, below).

**Pairs and Small Groups**

*The Son* can be completed in pairs or small groups, or given as a homework assignment for students to work on with their families. *The Son* can be completed alone, but we recommend learners work with others, to encourage conversations.

**Writing Assignments**

To support deep engagement with historical content, students can reflect on their experiences of completing *The Son* through written reports. Students can write about the interactive testimony experience as a whole or focus on certain parts of the testimony or themes from the feature to develop essays, written projects, and focused presentations.

**Creative Assignment**

To support creativity and critical thinking, ask students to design a memorial or museum exhibition to reflect Michael’s specific family history and life experiences.
GUIDING QUESTIONS, BY CHAPTER

THE SON LANDING PAGE

“Our friends were dying, at a relatively young age. I’d become like my parents. Most of my friends are just memories.” What questions are raised by this opening quotation?

BREAD

What does this chapter tell us about conditions in the Łódź Ghetto?

What does Michael realize about his mother?

BIRTHDAY

What do Michael’s reflections tell us about trauma?

At this point in Michael’s story, we face a decision point. Why is The Son structured in this way?

THE RING / SHOES

Why might Michael have wanted his father’s ring?

“My father’s happiness in life was his family.” What might this tell us about how Michael perceives his father?
KITCHEN TABLE

At the kitchen table, we reach another decision point. How does having this choice change how we interact with Michael’s story?

MY FATHER / EDUCATION

“You have to be very careful, because people like you had it worst of all in the camps.” What is Michael’s father trying to tell him? How might this response have affected Michael?

MY MOTHER / AVRUM

“I’m sorry you were ever born.” What does Michael’s mother mean by this? How might this response have affected Michael?

How might Michael’s indirect memories of Avrum affect how Michael thinks about himself?

ROGER

“we couldn’t get married in the United States” How does this experience of discrimination frame Michael's story?

“Being the child of survivors is core to my identity.” What does Michael mean by this?
REFUGEES

How do Temcia and Mojsze’s experiences immediately after the war change the way we think about their experiences during the Holocaust?

How might his parents’ experiences as refugees affect how Michael perceives himself?

THE ASSASSINATION

“They’re killing people like me.” Through his testimony, Michael jumps forwards and backwards in time. At one point, Michael appears to connect the assassination of Harvey Milk and the AIDS Crisis of the 1980s with his family’s Holocaust history.

“Our friends were dying, at a relatively young age. I’d become like my parents. Most of my friends are just memories.” What does this tell us about memory? What might this tell us about Michael’s identity?

Is Michael experiencing a form of intergenerational trauma? Is Michael experiencing a form of vicarious or secondary trauma? Is Michael experiencing direct trauma?

“This is what happens to people when they lack political power.” What does Michael mean by this?

GENOCIDE

“When I see those Syrian refugees, I see my parents.” What does Michael mean by this?

What does Michael’s political activism tell us about his personal experiences and his perceptions of his own family history?
FAMILY HISTORY

How do the four timelines – of Avrum, Temcia, Mojsze, and Michael – change or reframe or broaden our understanding of Michael's story?

The final page of The Son features an untitled fragment about how Michael’s parents first met (alongside a photograph of Temcia and Mojsze). Why does The Son end with this story?

GENERAL QUESTIONS

Are there any specific lessons Michael wants us to take away?

Does the interactive structure of The Son change or reframe Michael's story in any way? How do the specific decision points within the story alter how we engage with Michael's story?

What was most surprising about Michael’s story? What new and unanswered questions do you have?
VIEW THE VIDEO TESTIMONY OF MICHAEL'S MOTHER, TEMA BAUER

https://collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn507436
(1992, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum)

ONLINE EDUCATOR GUIDE & FURTHER READING

www.unsilence.org/the-son-educator-guide

ACCESS THE FEATURE

www.unsilence.org/the-son

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FEATURE INFO

The Son is based on interviews with Michael Bauer. Interviews were conducted and the online feature was curated by Danny M. Cohen. Copyright 2017. Unsilence. All Rights Reserved.