

# *The Genocide Contagion*

## *How We Commit and Confront Holocaust and Genocide*

*a book for learning about ourselves **B E F O R E!***

by Israel W. Charny

“This is a book that can open peoples’ eyes. It also helps people in their daily lives – in their marriage and bringing up their children. It is about much more than genocide. The hope is that once people understand more of the basics of how evil takes place, their knowledge can help make a better world.”

—**Review by a 90 year old child survivor of the Holocaust and a ‘graduate’ of the Warsaw Ghetto**

“Dr. Israel W. Charny, one of the pioneers of the field of genocide studies and an eminent psychologist, has produced yet another work that is insightful and thought-provoking. As this new book attests, Charny is a scholar with a sharp mind and a compassionate heart. The unique combination of true incidents, fictional scenarios, and exercises encourages readers to explore who they really are and to delve deeply into what they really think, believe, and feel about a host of critical and controversial issues germane to crimes against humanity and genocide. The learning exercises make the book a powerful read. If you are familiar with Charny’s work then you will rejoice at this new publication; if you aren’t, then welcome to a new intellectual and moving venture.”

—**Samuel Totten, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville; author of *Genocide by Attrition: Nuba Mountains, Sudan***

“While this book is at first glance an introductory text on genocide, it is at the same time much more than that. Israel Charny is one of the pioneers of genocide studies and a doyen in the field. Here he has asked (and answered) key questions regarding the psychological dynamics of those who commit genocide and those who collaborate with the murderers. But he goes further and looks carefully at those who say no when called upon to participate in the killing process. Charny seeks to look deep into the heart of heartlessness, with a view to identifying the evil that men and women do. This is a fascinating journey for which Professor Charny is to be commended.”

—**Paul R. Bartrop, Center for Judaic, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies at Florida Gulf Coast University**

“In this thought-provoking and eclectic volume, Charny engages in an innovative conversation with his readers. Drawing on his own well-known work and that of several classic genocide studies scholars, he asks us to confront fundamental and difficult questions about ourselves: Could I be a bystander to genocide? Could I be a perpetrator?”

—**Maureen S. Hiebert, University of Calgary**

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# The Genocide Contagion

How We Commit and Confront  
Holocaust and Genocide

ISRAEL W. CHARNY

ROWMAN & LITTLEFIELD *Lanham • Boulder • New York • London*

Introduction by Yair Auron

Preface

**1** Who Are We as Human Beings? How Do Ordinary People Commit Violence?

**2** The Foundations of Evil in Human Nature

**3** Exaggerated Self-Defense, Exaggerated Power, and Dehumanization

**4** “Just Like Everyone Else”: Conformity and the Lure of the Golden Calf

**5** SS Footsteps: Putting on the Uniforms of Camp Guards and Sacrificing Others

**6** “I Did Nothing Wrong”: Denial and Improper Management of Emotions

**7** Summing Up: Who Are We and What Will Become of Us? Toward Our Individual and Collective Futures

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