

ECHOES and REFLECTIONS

A Multimedia Curriculum on the Holocaust



Alfred Gottschalk

Alfred Gottschalk was born in Oberwesel, [Germany](#), on March 7, 1930. His father, Max Gottschalk, was a livestock farmer, and his mother, Erna, was a homemaker. Alfred, an only child, was raised in a traditional Jewish household and attended public school. In 1938, Alfred was expelled from school when a member of the [SA](#) entered his classroom and declared that Jews were to be officially banished from school. Local Catholic nuns were sympathetic to the family's plight and helped his parents enroll him in a Catholic school. Soon after, Alfred's father fled Germany via the [Netherlands](#), eventually moving to the [United States](#). In June 1939, Alfred and his mother also made their way to America.

During the war, the Gottschalks lived in New York, where Alfred attended public school. His parents held various jobs, including work in factories, and Alfred helped out by making money shining shoes.

In 1947, Alfred's father died of leukemia. After graduating from high school the following year, Alfred went on to play semiprofessional football. In 1952, Alfred earned his first degree at Brooklyn College, followed two years later by a second degree in Hebrew literature from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion (HUC-JIR) in New York. In 1957, after being awarded a master of arts degree from the



Visual History Biographic Profiles

HUC-JIR branch in Cincinnati, Ohio, Alfred was ordained a Reform rabbi and subsequently held student pulpits at synagogues in Owensboro, Kentucky and Cleveland, Ohio.

In 1959, Alfred became the director of the HUC-JIR branch in Los Angeles, California, rising to dean during his thirteen-year tenure. Meanwhile he earned a PhD in modern Zionism at the University of Southern California (USC) in 1965. He went on to serve as president of HUC-JIR in Cincinnati from 1971 to 1995. During his career at HUC-JIR, Alfred received numerous fellowships and awards, published scholarly works on modern Jewish history and philosophy, and rose to the level of chancellor. In addition, Alfred was appointed by President Carter to the Presidential Commission on the Holocaust in 1979 and was instrumental in establishing the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C.

At the time of his interview in 1996, Alfred and his wife, Deanna Zeff, were living in Cincinnati, where Alfred was serving as the chancellor of HUC-JIR. Alfred had two children, Marc and Rachel, a stepson, Andrew, and three grandchildren.

To learn more about Alfred Gottschalk, please go to [Full Visual Histories](#) to view his complete testimony.