

REMEMBERING THE HOLOCAUST

# American Jews consider the unthinkable

Should those who were once refugees become German?

By Julie Zauzmer  
Washington Post

Joost Oppenheim came into the world stateless.

He had no choice: Born in the Netherlands to refugees from Nazi Germany, both the country of his birth and the country of his ancestry refused him citizenship.

Eighty-one years later, Oppenheim and his family have a choice, but the decision is so wrenching that it has left relatives across three generations arguing about the ethics of identity.

The question for the Oppenheims: Should they accept citizenship from Germany, the nation that tried to exterminate them?

Joost Oppenheim, along with thousands of American Jews in the past few years, said yes.

“Did it involve forgiveness?” the Rockville, Md., resident said of his decision to become a dual citizen at age 81. “In a sense, it does. Becoming a German means I can identify, to some extent, with them.”

Although some of the younger members of his family have also sought German citizenship, others aren’t ready to forgive.

Since 1949, Germany has offered citizenship to Jews who fled Germany or were deported to concentration camps from 1933 to 1945, and any of their direct descendants. Until recently, few American Jews were inclined to accept it.

But from 2000 to 2014, the number of Jewish Americans naturalized annually increased more than 16-fold, driven primarily by a younger generation more than 70 years removed from the horrors of the Holocaust.

In 2000, 42 Americans were naturalized under the law. The numbers gradually crept up until 2008 when,



coinciding with the financial crisis, 514 Americans were naturalized as German citizens. The embassy thinks, but is unable to prove, that these Americans may have become more interested in a second passport as the economy at home got shakier.

In 2013 and 2014, the most recent years for which the German Embassy could provide statistics, more than 700 Americans were naturalized each year.

More than 200,000 people around the world have been naturalized since 1949 under the law, the German Embassy said.

Consul General Holger Scherf has witnessed four naturalization ceremonies during the past year, each one welcoming about 10 new citizens.

“For us it’s a very positive thing, that they are wanting to be German citizens,” Scherf said.

As the new citizens sit in a conference room named for Friedrich von Prittwitz, a diplomat who quit rather than serve under Hitler, Scherf always asks them why they chose to pursue citizenship.

“The young ones don’t have any negative feelings. For them that’s history; that’s

past,” said Scherf, who is not Jewish.

Steven Windmueller, a professor at Hebrew Union College in Los Angeles who studies Jewish American attitudes, noted that the Holocaust still tops the list when pollsters ask young Jews what defines their Jewish identity.

But although postwar generations boycotted German products for decades, millennial young adults have dropped some of those customs.

“I think that the Holocaust remains very powerful, but that’s separate from their looking at Germany in its modern and contemporary form,” Windmueller said. “They’re more open to accepting German products, German citizenship, German culture.”

Although a desire to reclaim family roots also plays a role, these young Jews want the benefits of a second passport – the ability to live and work anywhere in the European Union. By far the most common reason they give for pursuing naturalization, Scherf says, is that they want to pursue higher education in Europe, where a degree is often cheap or even free for citizens.

That is what first got Oppenheim thinking. His 16-year-old granddaughter Ezri White is starting to look ahead to college, and she learned she could study cheaply in Europe, said her mother, Emia Oppenheim. “In a very cavalier manner, she brought the idea to my dad: ‘Hey, you could get this citizenship back.’”

Oppenheim’s grandchildren know his story. They have heard him tell their Hebrew school classes how his parents left Germany thinking that they would be safe in Holland, and when the Nazis invaded they had to hand their children to a Catholic couple who raised them under false names. Oppenheim was 8 and his brother was 4. For two years, he lived in terror that his secret would be found out.

Meanwhile, his parents went into hiding. When they were caught, they went to concentration camps. Oppenheimer’s mother survived; his father perished.

Oppenheim’s grandchildren know what came after the war for him, too: a new home in the United States in 1946; four children and 13 grandchildren; a career for 52 years as a researcher at

Joost Oppenheim plays with Solomon Oppenheim, the youngest of his 13 grandchildren. Oppenheim’s grandchildren have heard him tell their Hebrew school classes how his parents left Germany, thinking that they would be safe in Holland. However, when the Nazis invaded Holland, Oppenheim’s parents had to give their children to a couple who raised them under false names. Oppenheim was 8 and his brother was 4. For two years, he lived in terror that his secret would be found out.

JULIE ZAUZMER / WASHINGTON POST

then? I’m not sure I would so easily grant them clemency for what they did,” Matthew Oppenheim, 49, said recently, sitting across the table from his father at a family dinner. “I still bear a grudge.”

But Emia Oppenheim, who lives in Columbus, Ohio, sees her new citizenship as symbolic of a positive change. “It was an opportunity as well as justice. It was time. Germany has done so much to repair and remember, that I think it was also recognition of that.”

Edna Friedberg, a historian at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, said some families such as the Oppenheims find meaning in connecting with their past by pursuing German citizenship.

“New generations don’t want their family legacy to be only about victimization,” Friedberg said.

Many others, though, fear that if Jews move on, the Holocaust will not loom so large in the public consciousness. That’s what Matthew Oppenheim worries about, now that his father is a German citizen.

“I think all survivors and family of survivors fear the world forgetting what happened. I would hate that this is one step further along the path of forgetting,” he said. “You can view this as a process of healing, or a process of forgetting. That’s in the eyes of the beholder.”

At the other end of the table, Emia Oppenheim’s 13-year-old son, Kaleb White, hasn’t forgotten. He intends to ensure that the next generation doesn’t either.

Kaleb became a bar mitzvah this year, and then a German citizen. He said he was glad to be naturalized because he saw it as an honor for his grandfather – but he wouldn’t call himself German.

“As long as there’s still anti-Semitism in the world, then the Holocaust needs to be remembered. People need to know how far it went before,” he said.

ZIKA VIRUS

## Caribbean island seen as main source of Zika cases in U.S.

More than 20% are linked to travel to Dominican Republic.

By Phil Galewitz  
Tribune News Service

More than 1,400 Americans contracted Zika while traveling outside the U.S. this year, and a Caribbean island nation is one of the top destinations where they caught the virus.

Visitors to the Dominican Republic account for more than a fifth of the confirmed Zika cases in the U.S. through mid-July, according to data from state health departments. New York, Florida and California alone tally 304 cases linked to the country, the data show.

As Florida officials investigate what may be the first non-travel-associated case of Zika infection in the U.S., Kaiser Health News looked more deeply into the origins of the 1,404 travel-related cases reported by all states to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For most people, Zika causes flu-like symptoms. Pregnant women are considered especially at risk of the threat because Zika can cause severe birth defects, such as microcephaly.

The CDC does not break out the cases it tracks by country of origin – only by the infected person’s state of residency. It said in June that 48 percent of the travel-associated cases for all of 2015 and through May of this year originated in the Caribbean, 26 percent in Central America and 23 percent in South America. The cases numbered 591 at that time.

Data from the four health departments that have

reported more than half of the national case total – New York state, New York City, Florida and California – provide additional detail.

More people who visited the Dominican Republic in 2016 returned with Zika than did U.S. residents who traveled to Puerto Rico, Colombia, Jamaica, El Salvador, Haiti, Guyana and Venezuela combined, the four departments’ figures show.

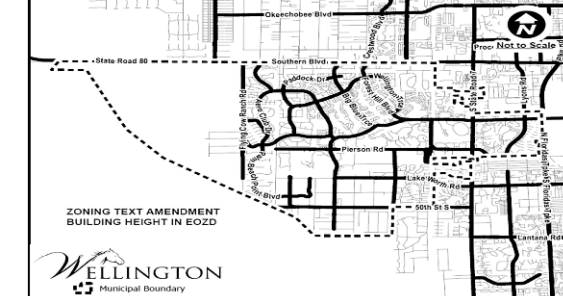
What’s the explanation? In part, it reflects travel patterns between people living in the U.S. with family members in the Caribbean nation, public health officials say.

“It’s not really tourists going back and forth,” said Chris Barker, a researcher in the School of Veterinary Medicine’s Department of Pathology, Microbiology and Immunology at the University of California, Davis.

Dominican Republic immigrants are the fifth-largest Hispanic group in the United States, numbering 960,000 in 2012, according to the Migration Policy Institute. Their highest population concentrations are in New York, New Jersey and Florida.

People who travel outside the U.S. to visit family tend to make longer visits and often stay in residential locations, instead of “more sanitized areas made for tourists,” and that may increase their chances of getting bitten by a Zika-infected mosquito.

Knowing which countries account for the most Zika travel cases helps drive public education efforts, said Vicki Kramer, chief of the vector-borne disease section at the California Department of Public Health.



## VILLAGE OF WELLINGTON NOTICE OF LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY AND WELLINGTON COUNCIL PUBLIC HEARINGS ON PROPOSED ZONING TEXT AMENDMENT

In accordance with the requirements of Chapter 163, Part II, Florida Statutes, the Planning, Zoning and Adjustment Board, sitting as the Local Planning Agency, and Wellington Council will hold public hearings on the adoption of the following Ordinance.

**AN ORDINANCE OF WELLINGTON, FLORIDA'S COUNCIL AMENDING SECTION 6.5.8.8 OF THE WELLINGTON LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS RELATED TO BUILDING HEIGHT LIMITATIONS; AMENDING SECTION 6.10.6-TABLE B OF THE WELLINGTON LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS RELATED TO THE DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS IN THE EQUESTRIAN OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT; PROVIDING A CONFLICTS CAUSE; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Said public hearings will be held as follows:

### PLANNING, ZONING AND ADJUSTMENT BOARD

Location: Village Hall, 12300 Forest Hill Blvd, Wellington, Florida.  
Date: August 10, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard in the orderly course of business. The hearing of the request may be continued from time to time as may be found necessary

Notice is hereby given that members of the Wellington Council may attend and participate in the board proceedings.

### WELLINGTON COUNCIL

Location: Village Hall, 12300 Forest Hill Blvd, Wellington, Florida.  
Date: August 23, 2016 at 7:00 P.M. or as soon thereafter as may be heard in the orderly course of business.

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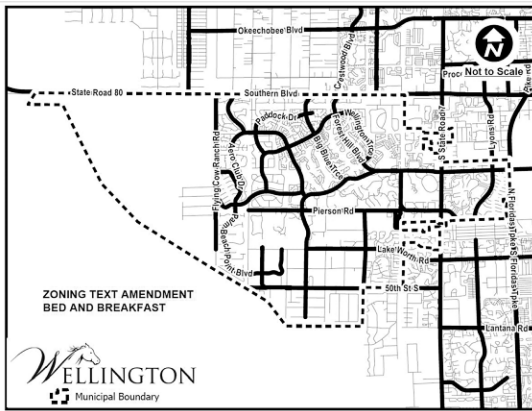
All interested parties are invited to attend and be heard with respect to the proposed ordinance. Copies of all documents pertaining to the proposed ordinance are available in the Planning and Zoning Division at the address listed below and can be reviewed by the public Monday through Thursday between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

Planning & Zoning Division  
12300 West Forest Hill Boulevard  
Wellington, Florida, 33414  
(561) 753-2430

Appeals: If a person decides to appeal any decision with respect to any matter considered at such hearing, he/she will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made which includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. All appeals must be filed in accordance with the applicable provisions of the Wellington Land Development Regulations.

Pursuant to the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act, any person requiring special accommodations to participate in this hearing, because of a disability or physical impairment, should contact the Wellington Manager's Office at (561) 791-4000 at least five calendar days prior to the Hearing.

Dated: July 19, 2016



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**AN ORDINANCE OF WELLINGTON, FLORIDA'S COUNCIL AMENDING SECTION 6.4.4.20 OF THE WELLINGTON LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS RELATED TO BED AND BREAKFAST ESTABLISHMENTS; AMENDING SECTION 6.10.7.8.4 OF THE WELLINGTON LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS RELATED TO BED AND BREAKFAST ESTABLISHMENTS IN THE EQUESTRIAN OVERLAY ZONING DISTRICT; PROVIDING A CONFLICTS CAUSE; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

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