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Exhibit puts Anne Frank in focus

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If you go

- » Anne Frank: A Private Photo Album opens Thursday with a 6:30 p.m. reception, followed by a speech by James Waller, a professor of psychology at Whitworth College, on how people come to commit genocide and mass killings.
- » Events are scheduled every Tuesday and Thursday through Nov. 16 except for Oct. 31.
- » The photo exhibit will be on display through Nov. 17.
- » The institute is open from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays.
- » There is no admission charge.
- » For more information, call (208) 292-2359.

The photograph looks like a scene from any beach, circa the early 20th century. Two girls in plaid swimsuits stand side by side, their backs to the camera, gazing out at the ocean.

They could be anybody's mother and aunt, anybody's sisters. And that's part of the impact of the 70 photos that will be displayed starting Thursday at the Human Rights Education Institute in Coeur d'Alene's City Park.

Otto Frank took photos of his two daughters in everyday settings, doing ordinary things. Both would later die in Nazi concentration camps; the younger of the two, Anne, would become famous for her diary.

Beginning Thursday, Otto Frank's photos of iconic Holocaust victim Anne Frank and her sister, Margot, will be on display at the Human Rights Education Institute in Coeur d'Alene's City Park. On loan from the Anne Frank Center USA in New York City, the displays show the Frank family going about their daily lives.

The photo of the two girls on the beach is the first on display.

"That one I think just grips you," said Mary Lou Reed, co-founder of the institute.

This is the first major exhibit at the institute since it opened in December.

The institute is coordinating with local school districts to bring speakers into the schools and bring students to the display. Eighth-graders from Post Falls and Coeur d'Alene will see the display early next month, to coordinate with Anne Frank's famous diary.

“It’s just so powerful and valuable to have the fine arts included with the history,” said Becky Ford, assistant superintendent of the Post Falls School District.

Anne Frank is a perfect focus for students studying the Holocaust, school officials and center representatives said.

“It’s a person that’s their age,” said Harry Amend, superintendent of the Coeur d’Alene School District. “When they see the pictures, it drives it home to kids at their level.”

The systematic extermination of 6.5 million people is difficult if not impossible to comprehend, Reed said. Anne Frank is not.

“It’s been amazing over the years how Anne Frank has turned into a symbol, like Rosa Parks,” Reed said.

Anne Frank is a person not reserved to just one generation, Amend said. The parents of today’s students know all about her. She’s an easy historical figure for kids and their parents to focus on because, before her life became so unimaginably horrific, it was very normal, he said.

“There’s a purity there, and then there’s a harsh reality,” Amend said.

Knowing the horrors of the Holocaust and the story of Anne Frank gives unexplainable power to the photos, according to the text that accompanies the display.

“The contemporary view we bring to the photos, along with our awareness of the fate of the Frank family, endow the images with an extra dimension,” it reads.

The photos will be displayed through Nov. 17, and a variety of events including speakers, movies and workshops are scheduled through that date.

Two documentaries are scheduled to be shown Oct. 26. A panel of speakers, including a Holocaust survivor, is scheduled to discuss lessons of the Holocaust on Nov. 2. A Nov. 14 workshop will focus on how to inspire and motivate young people to become human rights advocates. That night, a panel discussing life in the aftermath of war and disaster will feature guests from India, Indonesia and Bosnia, plugged in via live video conference.

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