VOICES

Remembering
the past, inspiring
the future.

Spring 2025

The magazine of
Melbourne Holocaust Museum

MELBOURNE HOLOCAUST MUSEUM

Judy & Leon Goldman Learning Centre

Cover: Holocaust Survivor Guta Goldstein with Montana Tucker at the 'Evening with Montana Tucker' event held on 27 August.

The Melbourne Holocaust Museum (MHM) exists to amplify the voices of Holocaust survivors as a catalyst for greater understanding and acceptance of difference, to inspire a better future.

In this issue

Melbourne Holocaust Museum

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From The Presidents

> When hate speech and incitement to violence are given a free pass, when there is no accountability for disruption and violence in the streets, when vile comments on the internet reach pandemic proportions, when the laws which are meant to address these issues are deemed insufficient and cannot be operationalised, that to me is a pathway to anarchy.
>
> Holocaust survivor, Nina Bassat AM

Nina Bassat said these words at International Holocaust Day in January 2024. Her prescient words resonate as antisemitism has risen to deeply troubling levels in Australia. From hate-filled chants at protests every Sunday to the firebombing of synagogues in Melbourne, we can see what happens when hate is left unchecked.

We welcome Special Envoy (to Combat Antisemitism) Jillian Segal's plan to focus on education and social cohesion as this directly aligns with our mission to use the lessons of the Holocaust to build a better society for all Australians.

In June, Pauline Rockman and I represented Australia at the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) Plenary which was held online due to the Iran/Israel war. The plenary opened with a session examining the global rise in antisemitism and its impact on Holocaust remembrance, education, and research. Experts presented their research on the various forms in which contemporary antisemitism manifests, and IHRA delegates shared insights into how their own professional fields have been impacted by antisemitism, and the steps they have taken to counteract this. Discussions also focused on honouring survivor voices and engaging the next generation of Holocaust scholars.

This year, there have been several changes at our museum. We acknowledge the resignation of CEO Dr Steven Cooke and the departures of Anna Berhang, Tracey Collie and Dr Anna Hirsh. We thank them for their contributions and wish them all the best in their future endeavours.

As always, Melbourne Holocaust Museum (MHM) has been a hive of activity, welcoming many visitors through our doors. The recent special exhibition, ***Aftershocks: Nolan and the Holocaust***, was a great success in attracting a diverse audience and generating strong interest and engagement.

During these challenging times, we draw hope and inspiration from the resilience of our remarkable Holocaust survivors and the many individuals who stand alongside us in calling out antisemitism. MHM remains steadfast in our mission to place the voices of the Holocaust at the heart of everything we do. We are committed to ensuring that our museum continues to be a centre of excellence in Holocaust education, memorialisation, and research.

Chag sameach and we look forward to welcoming you to our museum.

Sue Hampel OAM & Michael Debinski OAM
MHM Co-Presidents

From The Editor

Lina Leibovich

This issue of Voices is bound together by one idea: memory is not static, it is alive. Survivor testimony, art, music, research, and even social media each become vessels for truth. They remind us that remembrance is not simply about the past, but about the choices we make today.

As antisemitism rises in Australia and around the world, the urgency of this work cannot be overstated. Hate left unchecked quickly becomes emboldened. At MHM we see again and again that education remains our strongest defence. Whether through school programs, digital storytelling or intergenerational research, each initiative in these pages underscores the responsibility we all share: to resist hatred with knowledge, empathy, and action.

Eighty years after liberation, fewer survivors are here to share their stories in person. Yet their presence endures through testimony, archives, and the next generations who step forward. Our task is to listen, to share, and to ensure their legacy becomes part of how we choose to live today.

We carry their voices forward, together.

Testimony Over Time

Feature

by Dr Simon Holloway, MHM Manager Community & Corporate Programs

Left: Phillip Maisel z'l OAM and Robbie Simons editing survivor testimonies.

For historians, primary sources are of inestimable value in seeking to understand the Holocaust. The MHM's archive contains over 12,000 such sources. These include photographs, documents, personal letters and a variety of different objects. They each tell a story, and their stories help us better understand the experiences of those people with whose lives they intersected.

From the moment we first opened our doors in 1984, we provided a space for survivors to share their experiences with students and with members of the public. Spearheaded by the late Phillip Maisel z'l OAM, the MHM has recorded over 1200 video testimonies that are central to our collection and are every bit as important to researchers as the artefacts on display.

Writing in 2009, Olaf Jensen has described the important role played by survivor testimony in our understanding of the Holocaust[1]. Given the degree to which many Nazi directives were issued orally, and the high degree to which their written directives employed euphemisms, speaking to a witness of history enables one to cut through the tangle of falsehoods and address history 'as it really was'. And yet, while testimony's significance in this respect seems undeniable, equal consideration needs to be given to the fragility of human memory and to the degree to which individual survivors may choose to omit a retelling of certain events, or emphasise others.

Raul Hilberg – one of the first great historians of the Holocaust – put it very bluntly. Those who survived were not a random sample of those who experienced the Holocaust; those who chose to share their testimony were not a random sample of those who survived; and the stories that survivors delivered were not a random sample of their experiences[2]. A random sample of Jews from Europe would include those people whose rates of survival (by virtue of their age, their lifestyle or their location) were virtually negligible, while a random sample of survivors would include also those who for a range of reasons wished not to be recorded. The experiences of those people are – needless to say – of no less importance to historians than the experiences of those survivors who delivered testimony.

And yet, despite the challenges faced by using testimony as an historical source, their educational value is undeniable. As a 'witness to history', survivors are uniquely capable of impressing upon students the immediacy of their experiences. Additionally, by presenting a human face they are also able to render the Holocaust a story of individuals – not of numbers. Perhaps what is most striking is that even aside from their ability to add depth and clarity to our understanding of history, survivors also present a message congruent with values that schools seek to imbue in their students. Despite the horrors that they endured, their message is one of tolerance; in spite of all that they lost, their emphasis is on hope.

The role that survivors play helps us humanise the history of the Holocaust and furthers the important goals of tolerance and intercultural understanding. And yet, this is but the latest iteration in a long series of roles that Holocaust survivors have played – an evolution that reflects upon the ever-changing purpose of their testimony.

Curiously, survivor testimony began even prior to the war itself. As recently-emigrated survivors of German

concentration camps arrived in their new countries, many of them related the abuse to which they had been subjected, and they did so with a purpose. By sharing their stories, and allowing their stories to be further shared, they encouraged political action against Nazi Germany.

Such testimony took a different turn after the outbreak of war. The impossibility of leaving Europe led to a sudden decrease in refugees from Germany and from German-occupied countries, but in a number of cases Jews succeeded in smuggling information out. From the Warsaw Ghetto in 1942, written testimony was brought – with the assistance of the Polish Underground – to London, from where it was delivered to the BBC. From occupied Slovakia in 1944, the written testimony of two Auschwitz escapees was disseminated around the world.

In these instances, such materials served the purpose of encouraging military action against the Nazi regime. It was only by disrupting supply routes and by bombing key targets that the genocide could have been stopped. As such, there was a desperate tone to the testimony that was delivered. This is a tone that was not matched by later forms of Holocaust survivor testimony. At this early stage, it was not yet too late to stop the Holocaust.

Many survivors, once the war was over, fell into a lethargy. It was no longer possible to affect change, or to alleviate the injustice to which they had been subjected, and in the face of an immeasurable loss they elected to be silent. Desperate for more information, and aware of the importance that such information might serve, Jewish welfare organisations in Europe pressed survivors to divulge their experiences – to write them down, or to be interviewed such that others might do so on their behalf.

Sharing one's trauma requires a degree of courage and fortitude that is difficult to imagine. Many of those early interviews are granted anonymity, and they possess a rawness that we do not find in those that were conducted once the memory of the war itself began to recede. In the first decade after the war was over, the testimony that was gathered was used mostly for Jewish memorial services and in the compilation of *Yizkor books* that could present the history (through to the violent and bitter end) of individual towns and villages.

It may strike us today as strange that while this valuable information was being compiled, it was not yet being used by the judiciary. Nazi war criminals were going on trial, in both Allied and Soviet courts, but the documentation amassed for those trials focused on the perpetrators only. In fact, it was not until the 1960s, once the Holocaust had become a university subject, that survivor testimony came to be employed more broadly, and it was not until the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961 that survivors were given the opportunity to take the stand.

It was also in the 1960s, with the tremendous popularity of Elie Wiesel's *Night*, that Holocaust survivors – and, indeed, the Holocaust – began to enter into popular culture. By this point in time, Australia had absorbed some 35,000 Holocaust survivors – a number of whom had migrated from Hungary in the previous decade[3]. And yet, given Australia's unequivocal alliance with West Germany throughout the Cold War period, there was a reluctance to speak openly of German crimes during WWII. It was not until the 1970s that information on non-Nazi organisations (such as the German railways, the German military, and the role of non-Nazi police officers) came to be critically assessed.

In many ways, the real boost – both to the historiography of the Holocaust and to public understanding of it – came after the collapse of the Soviet Union. With the sudden access to documents, photographs and testimonies that had been recorded and preserved in Eastern European archives, the study of the Holocaust in Western countries experienced a revolution. For the first time, there was a deep awareness of the degree to which far-reaching decisions were made at the periphery of the German Reich, coupled with copious information concerning the broad collaboration of large sectors of the local population.

The amount of printed documentation from Eastern European archives alone amounted to hundreds of millions of pages, and stretched hundreds of kilometres in length. Research on those archives was financially sponsored by the newly-established United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), and was made conditional on local authorities using the information to educate their populations on their own wartime history. Such requirements would eventually lead to the establishment in 1998 of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA).

Far left:
Phillip Maisel z'l OAM with Mr David de Kretser, the 27th Governor of Victoria.
Left:
Phillip Maisel z'l OAM filming at an event.

Sadly, by the time of these important developments, most of the survivors who had previously delivered their testimony had died. Survivors who were still able to share their experiences were increasingly those who, by virtue of their age, lacked the agency during the war to make critical decisions, and were overwhelmingly those who had survived in hiding. As such, they were less able to report on life before the war, conditions within camps, the nature of Jewish Councils in ghettos and the difficulties of engaging in armed resistance.

Faced with the declining number of survivors in general, Steven Spielberg established a volunteer-run organisation in 1994 for the purpose of interviewing survivors around the world. The Shoah Visual History Foundation interviewed some 52,000 survivors between 1994 and 1999, including over 2,500 survivors from Australia. These are all available for viewing from our library, for the benefit of anybody who is doing research into the experiences of specific people, and include some 974 interviews with Melbourne-based survivors in particular.

In 2022, the Gandel Holocaust Knowledge and Awareness in Australia Survey (GHKAS/Gandel Holocaust Survey) found that a higher degree of Holocaust awareness is linked with decreased prejudice towards minority groups in general[4]. As such, an opportunity to avail oneself of survivor testimony is critical not only in imparting a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, but in addressing many of the broader aims of Australian educators. For those of us working in Holocaust education, this survey told us what we already knew to be true: Holocaust education serves a broader purpose than simply imparting the history of the Holocaust itself. It shows us what can happen when a society accepts the marginalisation of its most vulnerable members, and it highlights our responsibilities towards one another.

And yet, as is becoming increasingly clear, there is a danger to the universalisation of this history. The Holocaust is not just a story of 'what human beings are capable of doing to other human beings', it is also – and fundamentally – a story of what human beings are capable of doing to Jews. To ignore the relationship between the Final Solution (as extreme and unprecedented as it was) and earlier instances of violent antisemitism – including the murder, in the early 20th century, of more than 100,000 Jewish people in the Russian Empire – is to rob the Holocaust of its immediate historical context.

As educators, we walk a fine line. If we focus too much on the Jewish experience, we render ourselves irrelevant to the broader Australian population; if we instead universalise this history, we do it a disservice. It may be that it is here that survivor testimony serves its last and most important purpose. By framing the Holocaust within the lived experience of individual people, we ensure that it is never robbed of its Jewish context. At the same time, by humanising the Holocaust (an inevitability, when we are listening to a human being recount their experiences), we avoid the possibility of the subject being seen as only relevant to Jews.

At MHM, we look forward to many years of survivors continuing to recount their experiences to students and to the public. At the same time, we also feel confident in our ability to continue utilising survivor testimony in public programs, long after it is no longer possible to meet a living witness to history.

[1] Olaf Jensen, "The Importance of Oral Testimony: Some Introductory Reflections". Pages 9-20 of The Holocaust in History and Memory, Vol. 2 (ed. Rainer Schulze; University of Essex, 2009).
[2] For an excellent overview of the various problems with survivor testimony as an historical source, see Raul Hilberg, Sources of Holocaust Research: An Analysis (Ivan R. Dee, 2001) and Lawrence Langer, Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory (Yale University Press, 1991).
[3] Sheila Fitzpatrick, "Migration of Jewish "Displaced Persons" from Europe to Australia after the Second World War: Revisiting the Question of Discrimination and Numbers". Australian Journal of Politics and History 67:2 (2021), 226-245..
[4] https://gandelfoundation.org.au/gandel-holocaust-survey/.

by
Lina Leibovich,
MHM Voices Editor

Dr Breann Fallon with
Montana Tucker
at the event on 27 August.

Turning Influence Into Remembrance

How a social media activist and performer is bringing Holocaust memory to millions online

Montana Tucker is a social media activist, influencer, singer, and dancer, and the granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. With nearly 14 million followers across TikTok and Instagram, she is leveraging her reach not just for entertainment, but for urgent education and advocacy.

Her docuseries ***How To: Never Forget*** blends personal family history with Holocaust education, creating a bridge between past and present for an audience that often first encounters history through a phone screen. The 10-part series retraces her grandparents' journey across Poland, visiting Auschwitz, Belzec, and other key sites, bringing followers along in short, powerful clips.

When Montana posted her first video about the Holocaust, she knew some followers might leave. What she didn't anticipate was just how many - hundreds of thousands.

But what she also didn't anticipate was the flood of messages from strangers saying it was the first time they had heard about the Holocaust, or the first time they had asked their grandparents about their own family histories.

Tucker grew up with the Holocaust as part of her daily reality. Her *Zadie* wore pins that read 'Never Again' and 'Survivor' and spoke about his experiences to anyone who would listen. These were not distant, academic stories - they were the living history of her family.

It was not until after his passing that Montana felt the pull to see the history for herself. She travelled to Poland, visiting sites connected to her grandparents' survival. Standing in those places, she says, changed everything. "I felt a huge responsibility," she recalls. "Their stories couldn't end with me."

Her trip included walking through the grounds of Auschwitz on a grey, biting morning. "The air felt heavier there," she says, "as though the ground itself held on to the memories of those who perished."

> **If someone leaves because I'm talking about the truth about the Holocaust or about being Jewish, they're not my audience ... For every follower I lost, there were so many more who told me my videos opened their eyes. That's who I'm doing this for.**
>
> Montana Tucker

She stepped into the barracks, where the air was thick with the smell of aged wood and the ghost of human suffering. In one room, rusted metal bunks still bore the marks of countless hands that had gripped them. She stood at the ruins of the gas chambers, where the silence was so complete that even the crunch of her boots on gravel felt intrusive.

In Belzec, Montana walked the long path through the memorial site, surrounded by jagged stones representing the towns and communities wiped out during the Holocaust. The wind carried the faint sound of church bells from a nearby village - a haunting reminder that life continued beyond the camp's fences, even then. "These experiences are forever etched in my mind," she says.

She had always been proud of her Jewish identity, but now it took on a deeper dimension.

"Hearing what my grandparents survived gave me a deeper understanding of who I am," she says. "I'm here because they fought to survive when it seemed impossible. That's part of me now."

Far left: Montana Tucker photographed with MHM's board directors.

Left: Montana Tucker in the MHM Memorial Room. Photographed by Alex Coppel.

When it comes to deciding what to share on social media, Montana is deliberate. "Will this make someone stop scrolling? Will it make them feel something they can't ignore? If the answer is yes, I share it," she explains. Some details she keeps private, but the ones she shares are chosen to create connection and empathy.

Montana's willingness to be vulnerable marked a turning point in her relationship with her audience. She was no longer just an entertainer, she had become a bridge between generations, bringing stories of the Holocaust into spaces where they rarely appeared.

For Montana, using TikTok and Instagram wasn't just an option, it was essential. "Most generations now spend their time scrolling, swiping, and watching," she says. "If I want to reach people, especially younger people, I have to meet them where they are. Music and dance are universal languages, and when I combine them with history, I can connect with people who might never open a textbook." Her short videos are creative enough to capture attention but never dilute the truth.

She refuses to water down the reality of the Holocaust just to make it more shareable. The creative hooks - a striking image, a piece of music, a dance step - are an entry point to stories that matter.

The impact is tangible. Montana has received countless messages from followers around the world. Some write to say they learned about the Holocaust for the first time from her videos. Others say she inspired them to talk to their own families about their histories.

Teachers have reached out to tell her they use her videos in the classroom to spark discussion. Holocaust survivors have contacted her to express gratitude that a younger generation is carrying the torch of remembrance.

> **It tells me I'm reaching people who might otherwise never hear these stories. That pushes me to keep finding ways to make the history feel real and urgent.**

But the work comes at a cost. Montana's Holocaust content has made her a target for antisemitism online. She receives death threats daily. Some come as short, hateful messages; others are elaborate attempts to discredit her work. At first, she says, it was hard not to take it personally. She felt the sting of knowing that strangers could hate her without ever knowing her. Over time, she realised that most of the hate came from ignorance.

"Reacting with anger doesn't change minds," she says, "facts, compassion, and education might. If even one person rethinks their views because of something I post, it's worth it."

Offline, the reactions have been just as powerful. Montana has spoken at community centres, synagogues, and schools, where people who first discovered her online have come to hear her in person. Survivors have embraced her, sometimes in tears, thanking her for ensuring that their stories - and the stories of those who can no longer speak - continue to be told. In classrooms, students have shared how her content inspired them to challenge antisemitic jokes or misinformation among their peers.

Montana believes social media influencers have enormous power, and responsibility to use it wisely. "We can reach more people than most news outlets," she says. "You can use that for trends and self-promotion, or you can use it to make a real impact. I choose impact."

She is clear that silence is not an option when it comes to combatting hate. "Influencers have the power to normalise truth, compassion, and accountability. We have a responsibility to speak out, because silence lets hate grow."

For Montana, "'Never Again' is a call to action and a promise we have to keep," she says. "It means speaking up every time you see hate or injustice, even when it's uncomfortable.

Silence is what allowed the Holocaust to happen, and silence will allow history to repeat itself."

She hopes the next generation understands that remembrance is not passive. It's about action - online, in schools, and in daily life.

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>
> **Silence is what allowed the Holocaust to happen, and silence will allow history to repeat itself.**

Montana's work is part of a broader movement of young Jewish influencers and educators using digital platforms to counter ignorance and antisemitism. By meeting audiences where they already are, on social media, she and others are making Holocaust education accessible to millions who might otherwise never encounter it.

She thinks often of her grandparents, of the pins her *Zadie* wore, and of the millions whose voices will never be heard first-hand again. "The world we live in shows us why we can't be silent," she says. "If my videos can make someone care, if they can make someone learn, then I'm doing what I'm meant to do."

In the right hands, the digital world can carry memory forward. In Montana Tucker's hands, it already is. Her journey shows that memory can adapt to every medium, inspiring action and empathy even in the fast-paced, ever-changing, and unpredictable streams of our digital age.

by
Lina Leibovich,
MHM Voices Editor

Honouring an Enduring Legacy:

Dr Justin Olstein on the enduring legacy of the Holocaust's fourth generation

When Justin Olstein began his doctoral research, he was not looking for data. He was looking for voices - the quiet, often unnoticed voices of the Holocaust's fourth generation. These were young people who, in many cases, could still remember sitting with a great-grandparent, hearing fragments of a story that was part memory, part myth, and entirely formative.

Above: Justin on his Barmitzvah, with his maternal grandparents, Ica and Imre Gescheit (z"l)

"No one had studied them before," Justin says. "And I realised this would be the last generation to have even some interaction with survivors themselves." These young people represent the last generation to have even brief, direct contact with survivors. For Justin, whose own grandparents lived through the Holocaust, documenting their voices was both a scholarly mission and a personal commitment to keeping memory alive.

A Personal Connection

"All of my grandparents were survivors," Justin explains, "I wanted to shed light on the intergenerational patterns - both positive and negative - that operate in survivor families today."

This personal history, combined with the absence of prior research, led him to explore how both grandchildren and great-grandchildren understand, carry, and express their family's Holocaust legacy.

Strong Roots

Through his research, Justin found that great-grandchildren tend to integrate their family's Holocaust stories into daily life in ways that are symbolic and respectful, but not overwhelming. The balance is delicate as the fourth generation feels a responsibility - an almost moral obligation - to preserve their family's Holocaust stories. For some, that means telling those stories at school assemblies or in youth group discussions. For others, it's about lighting candles on Yom HaShoah, hanging a photograph in the family home, or naming a child after a survivor.

> **All of my grandparents were survivors. I wanted to shed light on the intergenerational patterns - both positive and negative - that operate in survivor families today.**
>
> Dr Justin Olstein

"There's a conscious effort to keep the past alive without letting it dominate family life," he says. "It's about honouring the history while protecting the family from being consumed by it."

In today's climate of rising antisemitism, this act of remembrance carries even greater weight. "That is the overall legacy for them," Justin notes. "To remember, and to remain resilient."

Trauma and Resilience

While researching, Justin observed that trauma-based family patterns can be subtle - emerging in communication styles, emotional responses, and expectations. Yet just as striking was the resilience he encountered.

"I found resilience-based family patterns that were varied and wide-ranging," he says. For many participants, that meant striving for personal achievement or cultivating a strong Jewish identity - often as a way to symbolically 'repair' the losses suffered by their ancestors.

"A family's patterns never occur in a vacuum - they may stretch back multiple generations."

Lessons for the Community

Justin believes his work can help the Jewish community in multiple ways. Therapists can use these insights to better understand clients whose identity and relationships are shaped by inherited experiences. Educators can design programs that connect younger generations to Holocaust history in emotionally sustainable ways.

And for younger descendants, Justin hopes the research encourages curiosity: "Understanding where family patterns come from helps make sense of them."

Research with Care

Given the deeply personal and sometimes distressing nature of the topic, Justin approached interviews with sensitivity. He monitored emotional states closely, giving participants space to share what they felt comfortable revealing.

Despite the subject matter, he often came away with hopeful impressions. "The most resonant theme was the determination to honour the past by building strong futures," he says.

The Urgency of Memory

As the survivor community grows smaller, the responsibility of remembrance passes firmly into the hands of later generations. The great-grandchildren - those who can still say, "I met my great-grandparent; I heard their story"- play a vital role in bridging lived experience and historical record.

For Justin, the message is clear:

> **Memory is not just about history books. It's alive in how we live, in our values, in the stories we pass on to our children.**

His research, in many ways, is both an archive and a mirror: a record of how the Holocaust continues to shape lives, and a reflection of how families choose to carry that legacy forward. It affirms what survivors themselves proved time and again, that even after immense darkness, life can be rebuilt, families can thrive, and identity can endure.

Zachor: Ask a Survivor exhibition.
Photographed by Simon Shiff.

Zachor
Ask a Survivor

In remembering the Holocaust, we recognise the resilience and endurance of survivors in their search for security and peace.

Between 1933 and 1961 Melbourne's Jewish population increased by approximately 40%, as Jews from across Europe sought refuge far from the horrors they had encountered during the Holocaust. Today, Australia is home to the second largest population of Holocaust survivors per capita outside of Israel, with the largest community in the country centered in Melbourne.

In June 2024 five survivors, supported by members of the MHM team, were interviewed by ABC Education for their Journeys of Hope project. Nina Bassat AM, Andre Dubrowin, Peter Gaspar OAM, Charles German and Eve Graham were generous and honest in sharing their memories of survival and resettlement.

Although their experiences are diverse, their stories remind us that the impact of the Holocaust reaches far beyond the years of the war. Child survivors such as Andre faced unique experiences of loss and adaptation. Andre was separated from his parents when he was just two and a half years old. They were later murdered in Auschwitz. After liberation, Andre was collected by an uncle he had never met. Having formed a close bond with the woman who sheltered him, Andre found leaving with his birth relatives devastating.

Liberation did not ensure safety or freedom, and it was impossible to 'go back' to the way it was. For many, reuniting with family or returning home meant confronting complex feelings of loss. For families like that of Nina Bassat AM, returning home was difficult as the Soviet army had taken control over properties seized by the German occupation. Nina, her mother and remaining brother were only permitted to use two rooms in the family home which was then controlled by the Russians. The family was determined to leave Europe as "it was a graveyard without even the solace of graves".

Peter Gaspar OAM's family was one of the lucky few who returned to a relatively intact house. His family's house had been seized by Frantisek Tiso, the brother of Slovak president and Nazi collaborator Josef Tito, who forced Peter's parents to work as caretakers of their own home. Tito would warn the family of round ups, forcing them to hide in cellars, cupboards, roof spaces, orchards, and garden sheds. While in hiding Peter became unwell, forcing the family to turn themselves in to local police. As Peter wrote in his memoir, "where was 'home'; for people who had their family, identity, and health taken away from them?"

By the end of 1945 more than 200,000 Jewish survivors lived in displacement camps, enduring harsh and often overcrowded conditions. Charles German and his mother were smuggled out of Romania and placed into an Italian displaced persons camp by the Bricha, who helped Jews migrate to British Mandate Palestine. Having spent most of his childhood in labour camps, Charles then endured an additional three years in a camp waiting for a sponsorship that would eventually support his migration to Australia.

Antisemitism and other ultra national ideologies continued to run rampant across Europe. Just one year after the war ended 42 Jews were murdered in the Kielce pogrom, prompting a mass migration from Poland and other eastern European countries. Eve Graham's family had survived starving and freezing conditions in hiding, and had narrowly escaped the Kremnička massacre, only to find themselves under Communist rule. When Czechoslovakia became part of the Eastern bloc, a satellite state of the USSR, in 1948, her family were compelled to emigrate in search of safety and freedom.

From 5 September to 12 October 2025, visitors to the MHM can engage with these survivors' stories in our special exhibition, ***Zachor: Ask a Survivor***, located in the Alter Family Special Exhibitions Gallery. This interactive experience allows visitors to pose questions via an iPad to life-size projections of the survivors, focusing on aspects of their post-war migration experience.

Special Exhibition

by Ellen Bradley, MHM Curator

This installation can be accessed free of charge to ticket holders to any MHM exhibition.

Zachor: Ask a Survivor invites visitors to reflect on the enduring impact of the Holocaust and the resilience of those who rebuilt their lives in Australia. Through immersive storytelling and personal testimony, the exhibition underscores the importance of community and compassion in the pursuit of belonging and identity.

This exhibition was generously supported by the Telematics Trust and ABC Education.

Visitors exploring
Zachor: Ask a Survivor exhibition.
Photographed by Simon Shiff.

Keeping Memory Alive Through Music

with Simon Tedeschi

> **And still, what gives me hope above all is that we continue to choose love: for the shared condition of being human.**
>
> Simon Tedeschi

We sat down with Simon Tedeschi, one of Australia's most renowned classical pianists and an acclaimed writer, to talk about the power of music, memory, and identity. Tedeschi will bring a unique voice to this year's Betty and Shmuel Rosenkranz Oration in November, to commemorate Kristallnacht and reflect on the enduring need for Holocaust remembrance.

How has your Jewish heritage shaped your identity as a performer and writer?

I didn't inherit stories. I inherited silences. Those silences shaped me. As a pianist, I became obsessed with pauses, with phrasing that breathes and breaks. As a writer, I circle around absence like it's the only honest thing left.

My Judaism is not religious - I'm secular, much to my grandmother's chagrin. But it's existential: a condition of being shaped by rupture, haunted by continuity. To honour my grandfather is *zachor*, remembrance not as nostalgia, but as demand, and to create is tzedek: justice rendered in sound and word.

How do you see the role of music in preserving Holocaust memory and Jewish history?

Music doesn't explain, it preserves. It doesn't instruct, it contains. In our tradition, memory isn't passive, it's a verb: *zachor*, an ethical insistence. Music remembers when words fracture. Jewish history lives in melodies that carried through pogroms, through exile, through smoke.

In the Holocaust, it became testimony, sung in camps, hummed under breath, smuggled out on scraps of paper. Music holds what was nearly extinguished and insists it was not. It is a vessel of emet, truth, when truth is too raw to say aloud. Not performance, not consolation. Memory, trembling but alive.

What does participating in the Betty and Shmuel Rosenkranz Oration mean to you?

It's a form of *avodah* - service. The Betty and Shmuel Rosenkranz Oration doesn't just ask us to remember, it asks what kind of people we become because we remember.

Kristallnacht wasn't an aberration, it was a warning. And now, remembrance itself has become contested terrain. *Zachor* is no longer universally upheld, it's politicised, mocked, instrumentalised. Participating here is an act of pikuach nefesh - not saving lives, but saving memory from erasure.

I don't speak as a religious Jew. I speak from the faultline - where silence meets testimony. I stand inside the fracture, because to step outside it would be a kind of betrayal. Memory that asks nothing of us eventually asks nothing at all. I try to speak in the tradition of 20th-century elders Martin Buber, Walter Benjamin, Bruno Schulz, Emmanuel Levinas, who wrote not from certainty, but from moral restlessness.

With rising antisemitism, how can art help us remember, reflect, and respond?

Art doesn't protect. But it fortifies. It doesn't shield us from hatred, but it resists hatred's most seductive weapon: reduction. Antisemitism thrives on caricature, just as outrage culture thrives on slogans.

Art insists on ambiguity, complexity, the difficult dignity of human detail. In a time when identity is performance and grief is ranked by hashtag, true art refuses to compete. It speaks in a register slower than rage. It mourns without hierarchy, and it doesn't apologise for its humanity.

What do you hope audiences take away from your Oration performance?

I don't want to offer comfort. I feel almost no comfort at the moment. Like everyone else, I am struggling a great deal. But I want to offer clarity. Jewish memory isn't a slogan, it's a covenant. It resists every ideology that tries to flatten, hijack, or perform it. We've survived not just because we remembered, but because we allowed memory to question us.

With the increasing intolerance and division, what gives you hope?

Hope isn't a mood, it's a refusal, a refusal to lie or simplify. Things I struggle with every day. And on a pragmatic level, I've never loved more the ideas that hold our great nation together: democracy, moderation, mateship, tolerance, multiculturalism, pride and humour.

What gives me hope is that Jewish memory - millennia old - runs deeper than the algorithm. That some things cannot be clipped, rebranded, or monetised. That we are not reducible to the moral fashions of the moment.

And still, what gives me hope above all is that we continue to choose love: for the shared condition of being human.

Hear Simon at the The Betty and Shmuel Rosenkranz Oration on 13 November.

Feature

by Chantelle Sondhu,
MHM Communications & Marketing Coordinator

Right: *Mother and Child*, from the MHM Collection 2453-1.

Remembering the Holocaust Through Art

The memory of the Holocaust is held in many places, from testimonies of Holocaust survivors and rare, treasured family mementos to objects such as uniforms, identity cards, yellow stars, kept for various reasons.

Art offers a different experience to remember the Holocaust, revealing the facts and emotions linked with memory. At the MHM, we are privileged to hold a collection of more than 300 artworks, many created by Holocaust survivors, providing us with a unique insight into the memory of suffering, Jewish life, resilience and the ongoing commitment to a better world.

These pieces represent keeping Holocaust memory alive through art. Through Tuszynski, we remember the Jewish life that was destroyed; Wengrow highlights the scale of the atrocity, forcing us not to look away from the potential for human evil, and how to prevent it; Horak's work allows us to preserve her memory, and her mother's, after their deaths.

80 years after liberation, their art provides a continuous connection with the varied experiences of survivors, and keeps their memories alive.

Moniek בן יצחק טושינסקי (Moniek ben Yitzchak Tuszynski), Devi Tuszynski, 2000

"I do it as my father and grandfather did who illuminated parchment. ... It is a monument to my family."

When Moniek Tuszynski was 13, he was murdered in Auschwitz's gas chambers. His brother Devi Tuszynski survived the war in USSR labour camps, later becoming an internationally acclaimed artist.

Devi Tuszynski's work *Moniek ben Yitzchak Tuszynski* is a memorial to Moniek and the vibrant Jewish world they grew up in, depicting Moniek in his hometown. Tuszynski's art style is a memory of pre-war, growing up in Jewish communities in Poland, coming from a family of soferim, who illuminated Jewish manuscripts. Showing talent from a young age, Tuszynski pored over haggadot, Christian illuminated texts, and the works of his forefathers for inspiration. His work is informed by a centuries-long tradition of Jewish illumination and finely detailed miniatures.

Settling in Paris after the war, Tuszynski kept the memory of the pre-war Jewish world alive through art and the people who inhabited it.

A collection of Tuszynski's works has been donated to the MHM by his nephew, Ian Tuszynski.

Collections

by Alice McInnes, MHM Collections Specialist

***The Holocaust*, Jack Wengrow, 1996**

"It is a homage to my wonderful [father] Leon Wengrowski, it is a homage to the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, but mostly, it is a memorial to all the victims of racism and persecution in the long history of man's inhumanity to man."

Jack Wengrow was a teenager when war broke out in France. He spent months hiding alone, sleeping in abandoned buildings and scavenging food. His father Leon was murdered in Majdanek. Following the war, Wengrow and his remaining family migrated to Australia where Wengrow became a celebrated artist and art teacher.

The Holocaust took Wengrow five years of painstaking and emotionally devastating labour to complete as he faced the reality of what happened to his father and extended family. Informed by the testimony of camp survivors, the resulting painting confronts the viewer with the sheer scale of the atrocity. The work shows 6000 individual faces, each standing for 1000 Jews murdered in the Shoah.

Wengrow's work forces us not to look away from the harsh realities of the Holocaust, and to continue to acknowledge its horrors to ensure they are not repeated.

***The Holocaust** has been generously donated to the Melbourne Holocaust Museum by the Wengrow family.*

Mother and Child, Olga Horak, undated (c.1960-1990)

"Over and over again, my art brought me the happiness that is hard to find in other aspects of one's life..."

As a young woman, Olga Horak survived several camps, forced labour, and a death march. Her sister Judith and father Hugo were both murdered in Auschwitz.

Horak's work *Mother and Child* reflects the relationship she shared with her mother Piroska, who was beside her throughout her camp ordeal. Piroska died the day after liberation. Horak emigrated to Australia after the war, and became known for her work in Holocaust education.

Horak's work was done for herself, with very few knowing she was an artist. Her first solo exhibition took place posthumously, with more than 100 works displayed at Goldstone Gallery in 2025. Having been largely discovered and displayed after her death, Horak's artworks keep her memory alive, reflecting her Holocaust experiences, and a long life as a talented artist.

***Mother and Child** was donated to the MHM by Avi Paluch and Pauline Rockman OAM.*

Right: *The Holocaust*, from the MHM Collection 2454-0.

Far right: *Moniek, בן יצחק טושינסקי from the MHM Collection 2413-0.*

Right:
Anita Lester with Holocaust Survivor Magda Steiner.

Upcoming Special Exhibition

Portraits of Survival

by Anita Lester

Anita Lester is a Melbourne-based multidisciplinary artist whose work spans music, film, visual art, and storytelling. Known for her haunting vocals, poetic lyrics, and emotionally resonant imagery, her creative practice often explores themes of memory, grief, and Jewish identity. Ahead of her upcoming exhibition at the Melbourne Holocaust Museum, we spoke with Anita to hear how she continues to use art as a powerful vessel for truth-telling and remembrance.

From 29 October 2025 to 18 January 2026, the Melbourne Holocaust Museum presents Portraits of Survival in the Alter Family Special Exhibitions Gallery. This series of intimate portraits by Anita Lester honours 16 Holocaust survivors from Melbourne, whose lives were rebuilt through family, community and culture. Through these paintings, their faces and stories embody resilience, vitality, and the ongoing responsibility to remember. This exhibition invites visitors to encounter these survivors not just as subjects of history, but as living witnesses.

How has your Jewish heritage shaped your identity as an artist?
My Jewish heritage isn't just part of my identity, it's increasingly become the reluctant goggles through which I see the world. I come from a family marked by displacement and survival. My great-grandfather was a Holocaust survivor from Lodz in Poland. He was a private and broken man, whose warmth rose above his mystery, but I knew early on that we were different as a family. Part Holocaust, part Middle Eastern expulsion, part immigrant, part prisoner-turned-soldier. That narrative inheritance shaped how I make art. I work across mediums - painting, film, music - but the spine of it all is storytelling. Jewishness, for me, is about remembering, preservation, ritual of prayer, bravery and questioning, and an act of defiance.

Special Exhibition

by **Chantelle Sondhu,** MHM Communications & Marketing Coordinator

How do you approach interpreting such emotionally and historically significant subject matter through your creative practice?
I approach it with reverence and irreverence in equal measure. I don't want to make work that sits safely behind glass. My goal is to humanise, not deify. For my 'Portraits of Survival' project, I spend time with my subjects and let their presence guide the process. Even though it's portraiture, which on face value (no pun intended) it may seem locked in its art form, I paint instinctively with a deep awareness that I'm not documenting facts, I'm trying to capture their spirit. I think emotion and history must coexist, not compete. It's the tension between the two that makes something resonate.

What does your exhibition at the MHM mean to you?
It means everything. To show this work in a space dedicated to memory and survival feels like coming full circle. Personally, it's a way to honour my ancestors. Artistically, it's an opportunity to challenge how we visually and emotionally engage with trauma, with the added message that as Jews, we have to carve out our own spaces to create, not only commenting on our past, but our present too.

In a time of rising antisemitism and historical revisionism, how can art be a powerful tool for remembrance, reflection, and resistance?
Art should not only reflect the world we live in, but interrupt it, stopping people in their tracks so they can see their biases through different lenses. In a very weird time, where history is being warped or erased, art can reinsert complexity and truth. It doesn't have to shout to be political. A painting or melody can carry centuries. I think visual storytelling cuts through cynicism. Also, art has always been an amazing balance of spirituality, storytelling and variations of passion (in the broadest sense). I'd love to think that even with a simple portrait, it humanises and modernises the content of the stories we often take for granted and often over-mythologise.

How do you see your role as an artist, in preserving Holocaust memory for future generations?
I see myself as part of a sacred channel, like a river that came before and will continue after. A river of stories and of experience. Many of the survivors I've worked with are in their final years. Their stories are urgent. I want to preserve not just what they said, but how they felt, their humour, sadness, silence, price and perhaps even rage. We need to preserve humanity, not just history. Art is such a rebellious act of reminding people of those feelings we don't want to forget.

What do you hope audiences take away from engaging with your work in this exhibition?
I hope they leave with more questions than answers. I hope they feel something lingering, whether it be discomfort, tenderness, love or maybe a recognition of something that lives in them too. The faces I paint are witnesses, but they're also mirrors. This exhibition isn't just about the past, it's about the present moment, and what we choose to carry forward.

What conversations do you hope it sparks?
I hope it starts a conversation about nuance and how identity, trauma, and memory aren't fixed, but they're layered and full of tension. I hope younger audiences, particularly those from communities with their own histories of displacement or silence, see themselves and their precious elders, in this work. That they understand that history is not behind us, it's in our bones. And that telling your story through art isn't vanity but more about survival in its purest form.

How do you stay connected to joy, resilience, and your own sense of cultural continuity while engaging with such painful histories?
By singing lullabies to my sons in my native tongues. By lighting candles on Friday night. By drawing portraits of people whose stories nearly disappeared. Joy, for me, is defiance. Resilience is built in community, in ritual, in art that refuses to forget. I stay connected by remembering that I'm not alone. I come from people who danced in ashes and still wrote poetry. That lineage is what keeps me whole.

Remembrance as Resistance:
Lessons from Eva Slonim

by
Julia Monique Reichstein,
MHM Information
Manager & Librarian

Wall to wall, my workspace is adorned with memories and optimistic proclamations in the form of book titles: *"Strength of Hope...", "Hope for a Better Future", "From Hell to Salvation...", "Come Spring", "There will be Tomorrow".*

Here I focus on one – Eva Slonim's "Gazing at the Stars: Memories of a Child Survivor", released on Yom HaShoah in 2014, nearly 70 years after liberation.

Her memoir's front cover and namesake alone pulls you in. The fact she was a child survivor of Auschwitz; her world-famous photo staring through barbed wire at supposed liberation propels me further.

Her one account will unlock for me our museum's Pandora's Box. A cacophony of communities – past, present and yet to become.

Human beings are not always humankind. The latter's heartbeat lies in its very name. Kindness. Pulsated by belonging, accountability and collective memory.

This was never more pronounced than during the Holocaust, even the very day Auschwitz was liberated 80 years ago.

When asked about her moment of liberation in her 1996 filmed testimony for Melbourne Holocaust Museum, Eva Slonim does not recount jubilation, freedom or hope.

No. And I'll tell you why. They (Soviet Army) came in and talked to me like savages... They were still in a fighter's mode. They weren't in a rescuer's mode. We knew we were liberated. We knew the gates were open, The Germans were still there...

Eva Slonim and her sister Marta, born in Bratislava Slovakia, were mistaken for twins. Arrested, they were sent to the children's barracks of Auschwitz on 3 November 1944 for the purposes of Dr Mengele's medical experiments. They bore witness and were subjected to unspeakable atrocities for almost three months, until they were liberated by the Soviet Army on 27 January 1945. Eva was warned by one Slovak soldier not to mistake her Soviet liberators for rescuers. "They are wild," he told her.

"I've always turned to the stars and to G-d. I begged him then; I very much want to live but only...if he will not take away my feelings and my humanity from me."

In times when we are feeling our identity threatened, hurting collectively or despairing within, remembrance restores our humanity and hope. Where Eva Slonim would remember by turning to the stars, I turn foremost to Eva Slonim and her fellow survivors' memoirs upon our library's walls. It is now they speak loudest to me and pull me from anguish's abyss. This is when my commitment to humankind through remembrance is reinforced.

Since opening nearly 40 years after liberation on 4 March 1984, MHM's stewardship, comprised then entirely of Holocaust survivors, was quickly flushed with demand to bring memory and stories of survival to the foreground. After just one year, our museum had already welcomed 50 schools, 150 teachers and 2500 visitors through its doors.

On Sunday, 18 October 2015, the 70th anniversary of the International Military Tribunal's prosecution of 24 prolific Nazis at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945, Dr Steven Cooke and Dr Donna-Lee Frieze would release "The Interior of Our Memories: A History of Melbourne's Jewish Holocaust Centre." Within the publication's 30-year history of our museum, appears Eva Slonim. She points out the burden of responsibility her generation carries to ensure memory is not extinguished. "[We are] the last witnesses to the Holocaust."

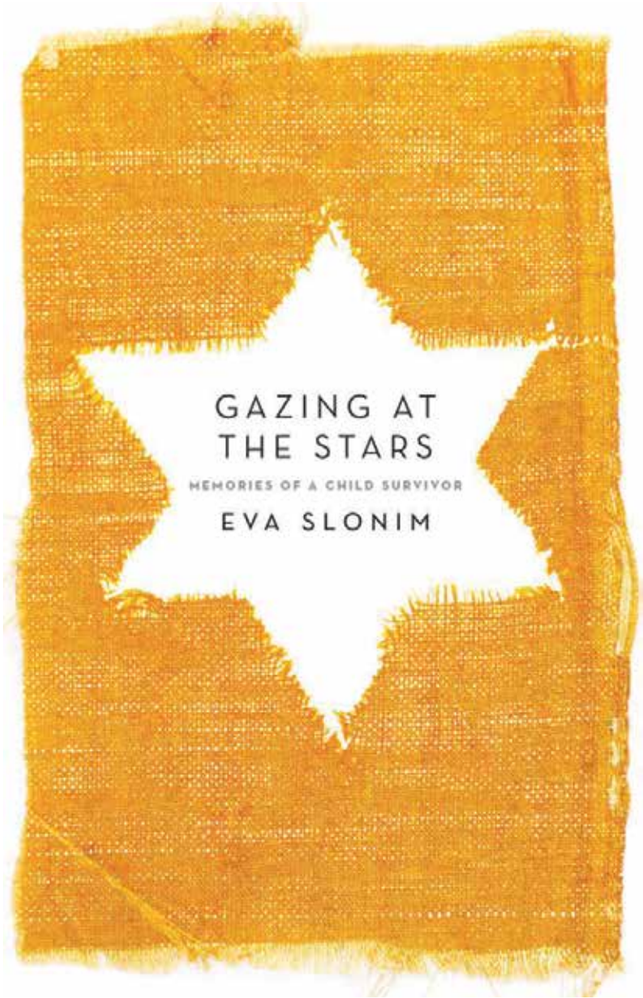
In Eva's oral testimony, she recalls a boy in Auschwitz's children's barracks. He informs her he is to be taken away and asks her to say kaddish for him. Eva is stunned. Until she peers at the number tattooed on her arm: **A27201.** She tells the boy, "My number will be your Kaddish."

The boy is consoled. In Eva's act, her number acquires new purpose and meaning. The boy knows he will now live on through Eva... and now, he lives on through us too. We will remember this boy whose name was Schmuel.

Remembrance not only recalls those resigned to our past. It unites and stirs us to face our present, reframing our mindset to create a better tomorrow.

Within our museum, in all its forms, memory is eternally breathing, shaping and guiding us.

Within the library space, it reinforces humankind and binds us as one through story.



Above: Gazing at the Stars by Eva Slonim book cover.

Learning from the Past, Shaping a Better Future

An important aspect of human culture is the ability to form a connection between memories of the past and allowing those remembrances to impact our present.

As this process plays out, it is hoped that the 'wisdom' gleaned from experience flows gently into the future, the legacy of which tempers behavior, helps us avoid repeating errors, and encourages ideals that will bring to fruition a world without "racism, hatred and prejudice".

The MHM is clear about what drives its Education Program: *we consider the finest memorial to all victims of racist policies to be an educational program which aims to combat antisemitism, racism and prejudice in the community and foster understanding between people.*

MHM provides in-person and online education programs for students ranging from primary and secondary school to tertiary students, underpinned by our commitment to child safety, the standards of which are "embedded into our practices and processes." *All programs are age specific and guided by our 'safely in, safely out, safely throughout' educational philosophy.*

At the core of MHM's learning programs is the crucial connection between Melbourne-based Holocaust survivors and artefacts. Students learn about the Holocaust through powerful individual testimonies, the delivery of which is complemented by the study of artefacts.

Primary and early secondary students (ages 10 – 14 years) engage with the ***Hidden: Seven Children Saved*** program, which traces the lives of seven children who survived the Holocaust by hiding and who eventually settled in Melbourne. Using first-person narratives, students learn about the bravery and resilience of survivors, as well as the kind acts of others who played a part in their survival. Through the use of soundscapes, moving images, projections, illustrations, and dioramas, the exhibition encourages students to make personal connections with the child survivors. Students explore the concept of 'choice' and how the choices people made helped to save the seven children. The ***Hidden*** program aims to encourage students to consider the choices they make every day and how these choices impact others.

by
Grace Powell,
MHM Education Officer

Also following the MHM 'safely in, safely out, and safely throughout' policy, secondary students engage with the ***In Touch With Memory*** program. Encouraging a deeper understanding of the Holocaust, students explore the experiences of Melbourne-based Holocaust survivors as well as analyse critical historical artefacts both in the classroom and the museum. An important component of this program is that, when possible, students are afforded the privilege of meeting a Melbourne-based survivor, listening to their testimony and asking the survivor questions during a Q&A session. The knowledge students gain from these sessions encourages them to think critically.

Reflection is an integral component of this program which celebrates the strength of survivors and the kindness of upstanders. Students consider how past events can inform the choices they make today to build a world free from "racism, hatred and prejudice". It is important to note here that through the generous support of donors to the MHM, a *Transport Equity Fund* has been established which covers the full cost of transport to and from the museum for student groups and accompanying adults who would otherwise not be able to access the museum in person.

> **When the Holocaust survivor was talking to us, he emphasised the immense importance of not letting the events of the Holocaust be forgotten.**
>
> Year 10 student, Fitzroy High School

Following the 2020 ministerial directive ensuring all Victorian government secondary schools teach the Holocaust as part of their curriculum, the MHM developed resource materials to support teachers in the preparation and delivery of the curriculum. These materials help to ensure teachers of Levels 9-10 have the knowledge, pedagogy and confidence to teach the Holocaust meaningfully and safely.

Another initiative offered by the MHM is the *Bnei Mitzvah program* designed to help those undergoing their Bnei Mitzvah find a meaningful connection with the Holocaust. This 90-minute program is age-appropriate and "emphasises the importance of being connected to one's Jewish identity."

The educational programs offered by MHM are underpinned by the idea that commemoration through learning will encourage and empower students to create a future that is free from racism and prejudice for all communities.

Opposite: Students participating in guided experience of the *Everybody Had a Name* exhibition.
Right: Heritage College students participating in the *In Touch with Memory* program.

Special Project

by **Ariella Markman,** MHM Project & Relationship Coordinator

Critical Thinking Is Critical

Addressing Antisemitism through Education, Innovation, and Empathy

At the MHM, connecting to story and memory is an essential part our work, using survivor testimony to foster greater understanding and acceptance of difference, and to inspire a better future. As part of this mission, the MHM is undertaking a deeply meaningful and important project that uses storytelling to help shape a more understanding and compassionate society: *Critical Thinking is Critical – Educate, Innovate and Advocate Against Antisemitism.*

Supported by the Multicultural Affairs portfolio of the Victorian Government, this three-year initiative, running from 2024 to 2026, seeks to address antisemitism by strengthening social cohesion across Victoria. This work is not just about remembering the past - it's about applying the lessons of memory to the fabric of everyday life today.

From the beginning, the MHM has approached this project by listening. We've engaged with a wide range of communities and stakeholders, ensuring that what we build is grounded in lived experience, trust, and meaningful collaboration. The themes that have emerged from the engagement process are clear. To maximise the impact of this important project, we aim to cultivate a deep sense of humanity, curiosity, and understanding. Our goal is to create an experience that is both innovative and memorable, while remaining grounded in the MHM's core mission: to connect through story.

To achieve this, the MHM is developing experiences and resources that inspire empathy, challenge assumptions and stereotypes, and encourage meaningful dialogue. These offerings will foster understanding and human connection, honouring the power of story and our shared humanity, ultimately working toward a more compassionate and inclusive future.

As we move into the next phase of the project, the MHM is developing two key elements:

A Virtual Reality Storytelling Experience: Designed for workplaces, community leaders, and the wider public, this immersive experience invites participants to quite literally 'walk in someone else's shoes'. Wearing a virtual reality headset, participants will enter the personal story of one of six Melbourne-based individuals, encountering their experiences and perspectives first-hand. This will be followed by a facilitated workshop on antisemitism and social cohesion, led by MHM staff. These stories, filmed and curated by Melbourne filmmaker and artist Anita Lester, are designed to create space for critical thinking, emotional resonance, meaningful connection and change.

A Classroom Resource for Secondary Schools: This all-in-one educational package is designed for secondary school teachers to use in classes such as homeroom, wellbeing and (pastoral) care. The classroom resource will help teachers foster inclusive, reflective conversations with students. Centred around a thought provoking, accessible, youth-focused video, the resource will consider belonging and connection and how we can explore difference in the context of antisemitism and the concept of social cohesion - what it means, why it matters, and how young people can actively strengthen it in their communities. The focus is to create a resource that is memorable and meaningful, something that students can reflect on and learn from. The resource will be distributed through multiple platforms, including ABC Education.

As with all our work at the MHM, this project is guided by rigorous, contemporary research. We are fortunate to be working closely with academic experts from Monash University to ensure our approach is data informed, effective, and maintains its focus on fostering empathy, understanding, and attitudinal change.

Thank you to all those who continue to support our work - your belief in the MHM and this project is what allows us to transform memory into action. We look forward to sharing more with you as the next chapters unfold.

The MHM is working to ensure the storytelling experience is ready to be rolled out later this year, and that the Classroom Resource is ready for use at the commencement of the 2026 school year.

Preserving Her Story

My Mother, Bella Speier

By Myron Rogers

My mother, Bella Speier, was born on 12 March 1921 in Stanisławów, Poland, daughter of Jeanette and Meier Speier. In 1935, her family moved to Katowice, where she continued her education at the local gymnasium. She was just 18 when the war broke out in 1939, and her life changed forever.

The family was first forced to evacuate to Kraków, where they remained until June 1941. Then, she was deported to the Tarnów Ghetto. From there, she was sent to the Płaszów concentration camp, and in August 1944, she was transported to Auschwitz, where she remained for four months. In October 1944, she was moved again, this time to Stutthof, near Danzig, where she remained until her liberation by the Russians on 25 March 1945. Each transfer marked a new chapter of hardship, uncertainty, and survival.

After the war, she returned to Kraków and Katowice in search of surviving family. She found no one. Her parents and all her siblings (beside one sister) had been murdered. In her words:

> **So I decided to leave Poland and to emigrate to a free and democratic country.**

Alone, she made her way to Munich, where she lived until 1953.

Despite the trauma she carried, my mother began to rebuild her life. In Munich she worked for several Jewish organisations, including the Central Committee of Liberated Jews, the American Joint Distribution Committee, the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and ORT.

She had one surviving sister who had left Poland for Palestine in the mid-1930s. They reunited decades later, and I met her when she came to Australia in 1961 and during a visit to Israel in the late 1970s. It was a rare moment of reconnection for my mother in a story marked by loss.

In 1954, my mother boarded a ship from Trieste to Australia. She did not know a soul here. She arrived with determination and hope, and a year later, she married my father. I was born in 1957.

My father, Frank Rogers, had arrived in Australia in the late 1930s, following his brothers and cousins who had already settled here. His mother had died before the war, but his father was murdered in the Łódź Ghetto by the Gestapo.

Two of his sisters survived and made their way to Australia after the war. In the late 1980s, my father returned to Poland after learning that a fragment of his mother's tombstone had been discovered during construction works in his hometown of Łęczyca. With great difficulty, my father managed to bring the stone back to Melbourne, it now rests in Springvale Cemetery, a quiet tribute to a life lost and a memory reclaimed.

My parents rarely spoke about their pasts; they preserved what they could, documents, letters, photographs. Unfortunately, despite numerous requests to my parents when they were alive, the photos of faces and places probably going back more than 100 years remain anonymous. They remind me that remembering is not passive, it is an act of preservation, of honouring those who came before us, and of ensuring that their stories are never forgotten.

I support the MHM because of its commitment to preserving history.

For me, it's not just about remembrance, it's about documentation, education, and ensuring that the stories of survivors such as my parents are recorded with accuracy and care. The museum plays a vital role in safeguarding these histories for future generations.

Opposite page:
Myron Rogers' mother Bella Speier on her wedding day.
Far left:
Myron Rogers' father Frank Rogers.
Left:
Frank's mother's tombstone.

Dorcia & Shlamek Rath:

A Story of Survival and Strength

By Helen Liberman

Left: Dorcia and Shlamek Rath.
Below: Dorcia with her grandchildren and family gathered around her.

It is with pride that I support the Melbourne Holocaust Museum in honour of my father & mother, Dorcia & Shlamek Rath, whose life was defined by resilience, love, and quiet heroism.

My mother was born in a small village in Poland, Jacmierz in 1920, one of nine children in a modest Jewish family. She was just 17 years old when she married her first love, Romek Vilna. Soon after, she became pregnant.

But war shattered everything.

Romek was sent to Schindler's Factory, and my mother was hidden by a Polish family in Krakow, as Romek paid to protect her. A midwife was arranged, and she gave birth to a baby boy. That same day, the Germans arrived. The midwife wrapped the baby and my mother fled, bleeding and alone, hiding under a bridge. She never saw either of them again. Romek was later shot while boarding a train.

Today, a lantern on my mum's grave at Springvale Cemetery commemorates her unnamed son, a symbol of the life and love lost during the Holocaust.

Her parents were murdered, along with most of her siblings. Two brothers were hidden by their Polish neighbours, who risked their lives to protect them, and five including my mum survived the war.

My mother survived five camps, including two labour camps and three concentration camps. In one, she was forced to make ammunition; in another, she sewed uniforms for the Germans. She was known as a good worker, and in each camp, someone, often a German guard, would secretly leave her pieces of bread. These small acts of mercy helped her survive.

She was severely injured by toxic exposure, which left her very unwell. At the time, she believed she would never be able to have more children.

After the war, she was introduced to my father, Shlamek Rath, by her sister Genia, in Breslau.

We don't know much about my father's life before the war, as it was never discussed. He was born and lived in Chzarnow, where his parents owned a bakery. He and his best friend, Romek Kuhnreich, were arrested in Budapest after helping forge false passports to aid Jews in escaping.

He was caught and sent to Auschwitz as a political prisoner, where he was beaten and tortured. Somehow, he managed to escape. He was a quiet hero.

My parents got married in 1946 in Breslau. They later moved together to Munich and then to Passau in Bavaria where they ran a leather business. That is where I was born in August 1947. My parents thought I was a miracle. Three and half years later my brother Julius was born.

In 1951, we migrated to Australia aboard the Cyrenia, seeking a fresh start far from the trauma of Europe. They came here with nothing but courage and hope.

We first lived in Carlton before moving to Brunswick, where my parents ran a knitting factory, making up garments for David Jones. We lived at the back of the factory. One night, after attending a Shoa Commemoration Night at The Kadimah, we returned to find our home and factory engulfed in flames. My parents lost everything - again.

But with remarkable resilience and an unwavering work ethic, they rebuilt their lives once more.

After the fire destroyed the business, they bought a Milk Bar and mixed business in Brunswick. During this time, in 1956, my youngest brother Jack was born, completing our family, another miracle.

A few years later, they sold the Milk Bar and moved to Caulfield, entering the cake business with the iconic Monarch Cake Shop on Acland Street. My parents became part of the vibrant European and Jewish cultural scene of the time. In the mid-1960s, they opened their own cake shop in Toorak Village - Rath's of Toorak - which became a local institution, known for its continental cakes and fine confectionery.

After my father passed away in 1974, my mother continued to live a full life. She ran the Sutex Shop and worked in the Chadstone Opportunity Shop to raise money for charity. She was proud to tell us that the shop raised over one million dollars for the Jewish Museum and the Blind Institute.

My mum hosted Shabbat dinners every Friday night and helped raise her grandchildren. Every Sunday morning, she would deliver Bagels to the 3 of us and give us her unwanted advice. Along with her good Jewish food came her good Jewish guilt and she was good in serving that up as well.

She moved into Emmy Monash Aged Care just before her 90th birthday and lived to 93.

There was a time when I couldn't bear to hear the song *A Yiddishe Mame*. It reminded me too deeply of my mother's pain, her losses, her strength. I would cry every time it played. But later in life, surrounded by her grandchildren and the love she had built, I could listen to it again, with pride, not sorrow.

We returned to Poland twice - once in 1990, and again in 2024. The first time, my brother Julius and I travelled with our mother to her village. She showed us where she had lived, where she had given birth, and where she had hidden. It was emotional and raw. The second visit, decades later and after her passing, was with our extended family. There were 23 of us on that journey, and it was coordinated by Melbourne Holocaust Museum Co-President Sue Hampel. We were welcomed by the village, by schoolchildren, and by the descendants of the Polish family who had saved her siblings. It was raining, thundering, like nature itself was honouring her story. We stood in the places where she had survived, and we remembered.

Despite all of her years of hardship, my mother never lost sight of how wonderful life is and can be, she saw the good and bad in people and taught us to be toleant and accepting.

My parents' resilience was extraordinary. They never sought recognition, but they earned the admiration of everyone around them. They rebuilt their life again and again, and found purpose in perseverance. They were people who had lost everything - and yet gave everything.

I support the Melbourne Holocaust Museum because it preserves stories like my parent's, stories of survival, rebuilding, and quiet strength. By sharing their story, I hope to honour their legacy and help future generations understand the resilience of those who endured the unimaginable.

Honouring the Past

with a Present for the Future

When Elisa Gray turned 60, she chose to celebrate not with gifts, but with purpose. Instead of presents, she asked her friends to donate to the MHM in honour of her birthday.

Elisa's decision was deeply personal. Her late father, Gary Gray, was a Holocaust survivor from Sosnowiec, Poland. As a teenager, he was torn from his family and forced into slave labour across several camps. Though he bore no tattoo, his camp number became his lifelong password - a number, Elisa says, "tattooed on his soul." After his passing, she had it inked on her own arm in remembrance.

His camp number wasn't tattooed on his body, but it was tattooed on his soul.

Gary was a passionate volunteer at the museum, sharing his testimony with students and contributing a book of short stories that still sits on the museum's shelves.

Elisa's connection to the museum began decades ago, when she trained as a guide and volunteered at the front desk. Though life took her in other directions, her bond with the museum never faded. More recently, Elisa's growing concern about the rise in antisemitism, both locally and globally, has only deepened her commitment to Holocaust education and reinforced the museum's vital role in combating hate through knowledge and remembrance.

When friends insisted on throwing her a party, Elisa saw an opportunity to honour her father's legacy. "What were people going to get me? More things I don't need? This was a way to do something that actually mattered," she explains.

Her guests embraced the idea, and donations flowed in. But the true highlight of the evening was the heartfelt speeches from her husband and daughters. "Their words were the most meaningful gift of all," Elisa reflects, which demonstrates that it's people's words and actions that truly delight us.

For Elisa, giving to the museum was about more than marking a milestone. It was about keeping memories alive, honouring stories, and inspiring others to give with meaning.

Celebrate with Purpose

Set Up Your Simcha Giving Today

Whether you're marking a birthday, anniversary, bar/bat mitzvah, or any special milestone, Simcha Giving is a meaningful way to honour your celebration while supporting Holocaust education and remembrance.

Scan the QR code to get started.

Prefer to speak with someone? Call us on 03 9528 1985
We're here to help you make your Simcha truly impactful.

Gifts in Will

We acknowledge the following people for leaving a gift in their Will to the MHM or MHMF.
May their memory be a blessing.

Regina Adelfang
Kitia Altman
Erika Bence
Joseph Brown
Peter Boss
Abraham Benedykt
Elza Bernst
Susan Blatman
Gitla Borenstein
Jakob Frienkel
Peter Boss
Hyman & Malka Brown
Joseph Brown
Majer Ceprow
Jenny Chaenkel
Richard Charlupski
Vera Dorevitch
Magda Hornung
Bertha Fekete
Chaim Feldman
John Fox
Jakob Frenkiel
Cecilia Freshman
Sara Frucht
Walter Geismar
Paul Gere
Fania Gitein

Chaskiel Gliksman
Samuel Gnieslaw
Jakob Frenkiel
Rita Greiner
Arnold Hacker
Eugene Hacker
Bessie Heiman
Mendel Herszfeld
Jack & Ethel Goldin Foundation
Anita Jaffe
Sabina Jakubowicz
Betty Janover
Basia Kane
Thea Kimla
Lola Kiven
Leslie Klemke
Eva Rivka Knox
Izabella Krol
Pinek Krystal
Elizabeth Laszlo
Nona Lee
Ivor Leiser
Ruth Leiser
Willy Lermer
Charlotte Lesser
Kurt Lewinski
Sara Liebmann

Julek & Ada Lipski
Gerda Rogers
Abram Malewiak
Abram Malewiak
Janina Marcus
Don & Sonia Marejn
Anna Mass
Sonia Mrocki
Victor Muntz
Albert & Lena Newmann
Kalman & Elka Parasol
Elizabeth Peer
Edith Peer
Esther Poelman
Kenneth Ray
Lilian Renard
Gerda Rogers
Joe Ronec
Beatrice & Rose Rosalky
Szymon & Hadasa Rosenbaum
Shmuel Rosenkranz
Szmul Rostkier
Bencjan Rozencwajg
Ben-Zion & Rosa Rozenswajg
Ignacy & Irene Rozental

Leslie Sandy
Josef Scharf-Dauber
Raymond Schiller
Marianne Schwarz
Helen Sharp
Otto Shelton
Marianne Singer
Sara Smuzyk
Oscar & Lisa Sokolski
Mary Starr
Georgette Steinic
Samuel Stopnik
Berta Strom
Geoffery Tozer
Joseph Tyler
Chana Annette Uberbayn
Emanuel Wajnblum
Claire Weis
Piry Weiss
Kathe Weisselberg
Ludvik Weisz
Jadwiga Wiener
Pinchas Wiener
Ludwik & Rita Winfield
Chaya Ziskind
Sophia Zitron

For all gifts in Will or general fundraising enquiries, please contact Aviva Weinberg at donate@mhm.org.au

MHM Volunteer Dr Margaret Taft photographed in the library.

Volunteer Spotlight By Jess Mansfield

For Dr Margaret Taft, volunteering isn't just an act of service, it's a deeply personal journey rooted in memory, history, and a profound sense of responsibility.

Now in her second year since retirement, Margi contributes to MHM through guiding adult groups and working in the library on research.

Her transition to volunteer work was a natural progression after a fulfilling academic career, which involved two decades at Monash University and a PhD focused on early Holocaust testimonies. Her research project, a biography of the life of Leo and Mina Fink, can be found in MHM's bookstore.

While Margi's professional path has always intersected with learning and teaching, her relationship with the MHM goes back more than 20 years. She explains: "Over the years I've been involved in many ways - supporting committees, giving talks, mentoring guides. It's been a constant thread through different chapters of my life." However, her connection to the museum runs far deeper. "I'm the youngest child of Holocaust survivors," she shares. "I grew up without extended family. The reason for that is in this museum."

What she values most about her experience as a volunteer is the human connection. "You never know who you'll meet," she says. "Every group is different. Some come with personal ties. Others leave with a profound impact they didn't expect." Because of this, her guiding approach is anchored in empathy and education. "The Holocaust didn't start with Auschwitz, it ended there," she often reminds groups. "It started with words, with dehumanisation. That's the lesson we must carry forward."

Her volunteer work is an act of memory and continuity. "I feel like my parents are on my shoulder," she says. "This work connects me to them, to community. If I can change one person's thinking, then I've done my job." In doing so, she continues to honour the memory of those who came before her, and the future of those still learning.

You can find Margi in the library every Thursday or as part of our guided tours, continuing to make a difference.

Farewell by Sue Hampel, MHM Co-President

Farewell Dr Anna Hirsh

Dr Anna Hirsh served as the Manager of Collections & Research at the MHM for more than 10 years.

Anna began as a collections volunteer in June 2014, and she was first employed as Collections Registrar. Anna brought with her professional degrees of B. Ed (Visual Arts), Masters of Art Curatorship, and a PhD in Jewish Studies with a focus on Jewish cultural memory through the Holocaust.

Anna professionalised the collections department over the subsequent decade, collecting comprehensively, bringing the standards up to best international practice.

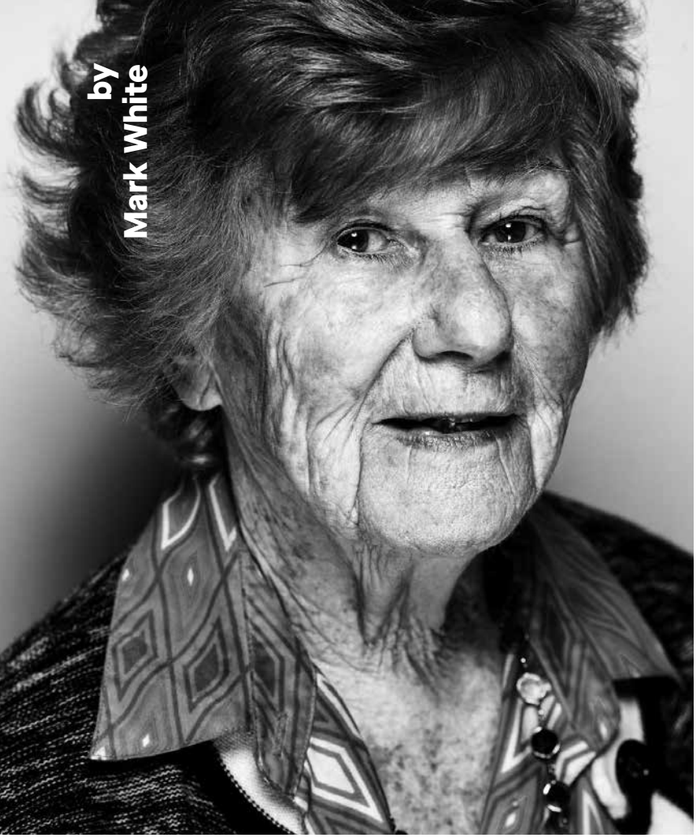
Anna dedicated her career to studying the Holocaust and contributed extensively through her research and writing. She actively represented and promoted the museum's collections at conferences both nationally and internationally.

During the museum's redevelopment, Anna played a key role in ensuring the seamless relocation of the collection. She was involved in major conservation projects and provided vital support to the curatorial team. Over the years, she also supervised numerous volunteers and mentored university interns, guiding them with professionalism and care.

Anna cultivated meaningful connections within the Holocaust education and museum sectors, reinvesting best practices and high standards into the museum's operations.

Her relationships with Holocaust survivor guides, MHM volunteers, colleagues, and the broader community remain a source of deep personal and professional value.

Thank you Anna for your valuable contributions to the museum and we extend our best wishes for continued success in all your future endeavours.



In Memoriam

In Memory of Halina Maria Neuberg

My mum was born on 14 May 1928, to Natsec (Isaac) Neuberg and Wissa (Louisa) Neuberg in Krakow Poland. Mum's early years in Krakow were filled with simplicity and enjoying the quiet pleasures of life.

But all that changed when Mum was just 11 years old. The Nazi invasion of Poland shattered her world. Overnight, her family, once part of the fabric of Polish society, found themselves marked for persecution.

Mum later wrote about these years in her first book, *Swimming Under Water*, which chronicled the horrors of that time. Using false Aryan papers, Mum and her mother survived the war, hiding in plain sight—her mother cooking for the German army, her father performing piano for the Nazis. But the war left deep, invisible scars on Mum.

After the war finally ended in 1945, Mum and her parents made the brave decision to start anew in Australia. Mum embraced her new life in Australia with determination and grit. She trained to become a beautician and hairdresser, and in 1953, she married Emmanuel White, a man whose own survival story from Dachau shaped their lives together; and in 1957 I was born.

But life threw more challenges at Mum. In 1960, Dad was diagnosed with Muscular Dystrophy, and in February 1963, he passed away, leaving Mum a widow at the age of 35. Living on a widow's pension, she worked tirelessly, studying to increase her chances of securing employment and balancing her career and her role as a mother.

In 1973, Mum married Lutek, and together they found a deep, abiding happiness. Their life together was one of warmth, joy, and stability. But in 1999, when Lutek passed away, Mum once again faced loss. Yet, she carried on, defying the odds.

Her work with the MHM for 25 years was a testament to her resilience and her desire to make the world a better place. She educated children about the dangers of antisemitism and intolerance, passing on the lessons of her own survival.

Even as the years wore on, and dementia slowly took its toll, Mum never lost her zest for life. Before Mum's illness progressed too far, she wrote her second book, *My Life in the Lucky Country*.

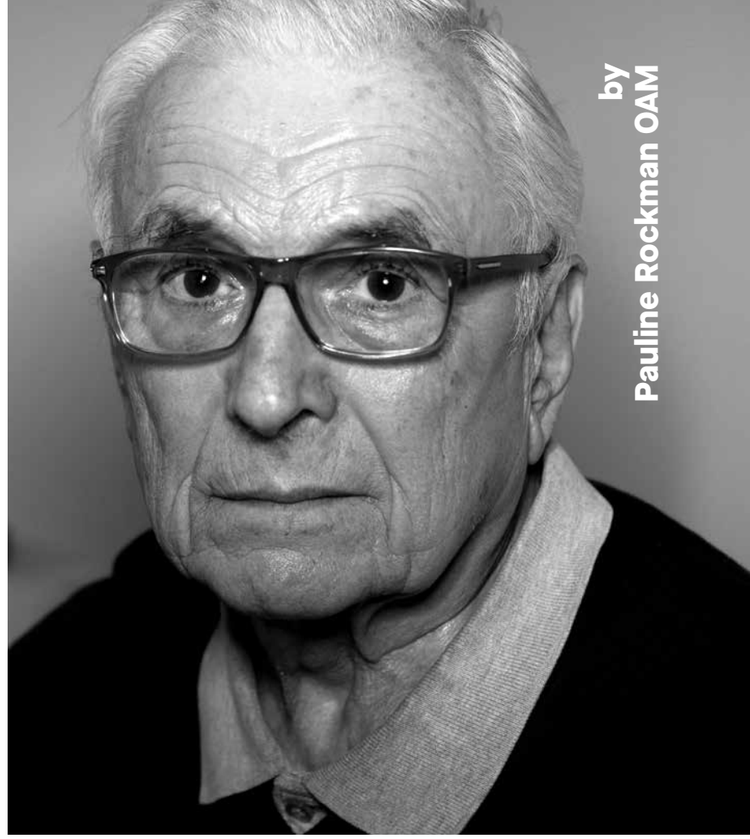
Mum's legacy is one of love, resilience, and connection. She bonded families together with her heart. She was universally loved, respected, and cherished by all who knew her.

I love you, Mum.

Please note, this is an abridged version of my eulogy.

In Memoriam

In Memory of Otto Kohn



We remember the life and times of Otto Kohn, Holocaust survivor, European gentleman.

Otto was born in Prague in 1928. He grew up in a comfortable and loving home with his father Arnold, mother Zdenka, and sister Olga.

With the advent of the Nazis and World War Two, the family was interned at Theresienstadt concentration camp in 1942. Otto was just thirteen years old. They were all transported to Auschwitz in 1944. Soon after, Otto was separated from his mother and sister, and they were murdered. With his father, Otto endured four more concentration camps — Landsberg, Kaufering, Landshut, and Dachau.

In 1945 his father died in his arms. It was just before the end of the war.

Otto arrived in Australia in 1950 as a penniless, orphaned refugee. At the age of 18, he proceeded to rebuild his life, establishing a successful business, OK Timbers. He lived by principles of integrity, loyalty and friendship. I first met Otto in 1996. We met again over the years, and COVID lockdowns in Melbourne brought our paths together once more. He became a mentor, dear friend, and source of inspiration — teaching me about the human spirit and resilience, often over long lunches.
He challenged me about truth and human nature. Otto had an impeccable memory, recalling things in an amazing manner. One did not dare test him as he was generally right. Despite his experiences, Otto didn't seek revenge but chose to transform sorrow into success.

Otto's life was fractured by the Holocaust, trauma that stayed with him throughout his life. Otto's legacy reminds us of hope's power, resilience's relentlessness, and the importance of remembrance. He lived a remarkable life despite the immense challenges he faced.

He is survived by daughter Daniele Griffiths and grandchildren Benjamin and Bethany.

The Otto Kohn Education Centre at the MHM is his lasting tribute, dedicated to the memory of his parents and sister. Otto recorded three testimonies of his experience in the Shoah, two for MHM and one for the USC Shoah Foundation Institute.

May Otto's memory be a blessing and inspiration.

די שבּועה פֿון נקמה איז אונדזערע הערצער
(זכרונות פֿון 19-טן אַפּריל 1943 איז וואַרשעווער געטאָ)
פֿון ר. מיטלבערג, ע"ה, וועלכער האָט איבערגעלעבט דעם אויפֿשטאַנד איז וואַרשעווער געטאָ אונעם חורבן.
דערשינען אין "די יידישע פּאָסט", אין מעלבורן אַפּריל, 1951

יאָ איין, יאָ אויס פֿייערן מיר דעם יאָרצײַט פֿון יענעם ניט-פֿאַרגעסענעם אין דער יידישער מאַרטיראָלאָגיע טראַגישן ערב-פּסח בײַנאַכט פֿון 19טן אַפּריל 1943, דעם אַרײַנמאַרש פֿון די נאַצי האָרדעס אין וואַרשעווער געטאָ. און יעדעס מאָל, ציטערט אויף אין מיר אַ דערדרינקענדיק געפֿיל, וואָס באַהערשט מײַן גאַנץ וועזן און אין קאָפּ קלאַפֿן ווי מיט טויזנט האַמערס די פֿראַגע: איז עס טאַקע אמת, בין איך איינער פֿון יענעם הייפֿעלע על-פּי-נס לעבנגעבליבענע? און טיילמאָל פֿאַרטייעט זיך אין מײַן געמיט אַ מחשבֿה: ניט אַנדערש ווי דו ביסט אַ גילגול פֿון יענעם דאָרט, וואָס איז אומגעקומען אין די פֿלאַמען פֿון וואַרשעווער געטאָ אויפֿשטאַנד, יענעם טראַגישן 19טן אַפּריל, און צוריק אויפֿגעשטאַנען תּחית-המתים... ווי אַזוי אַנדערש קאָן עס זײַן? פֿון די חורבֿות פֿון ברענענדיקן געטאָ בין איך שפּעטער פֿאַרוואָגלט געוואָרן קיין טרעמבלינקע און שפּעטער וויטער אויף אַנדערע גחינום וועגן... ווען ס'קומט מיר אויס מיט פֿרײַנט זיך אומצוקערן צו זכרונות פֿון וואַרשעווער געטאָ אויפֿשטאַנד, פֿרעגן זיי: פֿאַרוואָס האָבן די יידן אין געטאָ אַזוי שפּעט אָנגעהויבן דעם אויפֿשטאַנד? די פֿראַגע קאָן מען זעלבסטפֿאַרשטענדלעך ניט פֿאַרענטפֿערן אין אַזאַ קורצן צײַטונגס אַרטיקל. ס'דאַרף אָבער צוגעגעבן ווערן, אַז ס'זײַנען געווען גענוג צעשטערענישע סיבות, וואָס האָבן דערפֿירט צו דער דאָזיקער פֿאַרשפּעטיקונג. דער וואַרשעווער געטאָ אויפֿשטאַנד איז געקומען אַלס פּועל-יוצא פֿון דער אויסגעפֿירטער אַקציע נאָך אין חודש יאַנואַר 1943. דאַן ווען בלוטדורשטיקע נאַצי-בעסטיעס האָבן אָנגעהויבן רײניקן דעם ראַיאָן - שולץ - נאָוואָליפּקי און דאָס דאָזיקע אַדורכגעפֿירט במשך פֿון געצײלטע טעג. שוין אין יענער צײַט האָבן די פֿאַרמוטשעטע געטאָ-איינוואוינער פֿאַרשטאַנען, אַז פֿריער אָדער שפּעטער קומט די ריי אויף אַלע. און מ'האָט געפֿילט אין דער לופֿטן, אַז דאָס אומפֿאַרמיידלעכע איז נאָענט. און דער קאָמף איז נאָענט... דער ווידערשטאַנד וואָס די יידן האָבן געשטעלט בעת דער יאַנואַר-אַקציע, האָט די דײַטשן געווײַזן, אַז אין געטאָ עקזיסטירט אַ כּוח. און די דײַטשן האָבן מיט זייער גאַנצן אויסשפּיר-אַפּאַראַט אָרגאַניזירט אַרום זייערע מענטשן-שפּיאָנען, ווי די אויסוואורפֿן דער אַלטער נאָסעל, יוזשעק און אַנדערע פֿאַררעטער. די שפּיאָנען זײַנען אַרומגעגאַנגען פֿון הויף צו הויף און געמאַכט מאַפּעס, וואו ס'געפֿינען זיך די יידישע בונקערס, כדי די דײַטשישע רוצחים זאָלן פֿון דער לופֿט קאָנען די הייזער באָמבאַרדירן. און אַזוי איז עס אויך שפּעטער געווען. יעדער פֿון אונדז האָט דערפֿילט, אַז די צײַט איז קורץ און מ'דאַרף זיך צוגרײַטן צו מעשׂים. איך האָב זיך צו יענער צײַט געפֿונען אויפֿן באָדן פֿון שולצן. מיר האָבן געוואוסט, אַז דאָס זײַנען דעצידירנדיקע טעג – לעצטע מאָמענטן, און די אונטערגרונט-באַוועגונג האָט אויך אָנגעהויבן אַ קאָנטר-שפּיאָנאַזש-אַקציע. קודם-כל האָט מען פֿון דער געטאָ-גאַס אָפּגעזוימט די באַקאַנטע דײַטשישע שפּיאָנען. כּמעט יעדן טאָג, זײַנען דורך אונדזערע אויפֿשטעלער אַוועקגעלייגט געוואָרן עטלעכע פֿאַרראַטער, צווישן זיי, דער קליינער טיגער לייקין, פֿירשטענבערג און אַנדערע. די גרוסן, וואָס זײַנען צו אונדז דערגאַנגען פֿון דרויסן, זײַנען געווען, אַז אונדזער גורל איז אַ געהסמעטער. אונדזערע פֿרויען האָבן פֿון די קאַרגע מעל-זאַפֿאַסן אָנגעהויבן אויסבאַקן פֿאַרפֿל און אַנדערע געבעקס. דאָס איז געטאָן געוואָרן בײַנאַכט. בײַטאָג איז אוממעגלעך געווען צו גיין צו דע בעקערס. מענער האָבן געבויט בונקערס. גאַנצע נעכט זײַנען מיר באַשעפֿטיקט געווען בײ דער דאָזיקער אַרבעט, וואָס האָט געפֿאָדערט די גרעסטע פֿרעציזקייט, ווי צ.ב. טריקענען וועטן, וועלכע זײַנען שפּעטער פֿאַרמאַסקירט געוואָרן מיט עלעקטרישע אָדער קאָקס-אייוולעך. די אומשטענדן האָבן דערפֿירט אַז די אַרבעט איז ווילנדיק אָדער ניט-ווילנדיק געטאָן געוואָרן בפֿרהסיא, ווייל יעדער האָט זיך געוואָלט ראַטעוון. די דײַטשישע וואַנדאַלן האָבן גענוי געוואוסט וואָס עס טוט זיך אין געטאָ. אינצווישנצײַט זײַנען געקומען מיט אַ באַזוך אין געטאָ צוויי באַרימטע נאַצי-מערדער אויבערשאַרפֿירער בלעשער און רירנשאָפּ. זייער באַזוך האָט אָנגעוואָרפֿן אַ פּחד אויפֿן געטאָ און ווי נאָר די רוצחים האָבן דערזען אויף דער גאַס אַ יִד, האָבן זיי פֿון אים אָפּגעשפּעט, אים נאָכגעלאָפֿן און גלייך דערשאָסן. דער דערשאָסענער האָט אפֿילו געמעגט זײַן אַ פֿערזאָן, אָנערקענט דורך דער דײַטשישער "באַפֿעל-שטעלע", אַז ער איז אין געטאָ לעגאַל. איינמאָל איז דער זעלבער רוצח בלעשער אַרײַנגעקומען אין יידנראַט און זיך פֿאַרקלאָגט אַז ער איז זייער פֿאַרמאַטערט, ווייל ער האָט דעם זעלבן טאָג מיט זײַן אייגענער האַנט דערשאָסן 42 יידן. אין יענער צײַט, זײַנען מיר אָבער שוין ניט געווען קיין פּחדנים. יעדער פֿון אונדז האָט שטום אין הארצן געטראָגן אַ שבּועה פֿון נקמה. אין מײַנע היינטיקע קורצע זכרונות בין איך אויסן זיך בלויז אָפּשטעלן אויף די ערשטע שעהען פֿון יענער טרויעריקער ערב-פּסח-נאַכט, ווען יעדער פֿון אונדז, כאָטש מיט אַ צעבראָכן האַרץ, האָט דאָך געהאָפֿט, אַז מען וועט דערלעבן אָפּצוריכטן דעם סדר. דער גורל האָט אָבער פֿאַר אונדז צוגעגרייט דאָס ערגסטע. 9 אַזײגער אין אָונט, האָבן מיר געקריגן פֿאַרטרויעלעכע ידיעות, אַז די נאַכט וועט זײַן פֿאַר אונדז די פֿינצטערסטע אין אונדזער לעבן. און יעדע שפּעטערדיקע מינוט האָט דאָס באַשטעטיקט. אין זעלבן טאָג האָט זיך אונדז נאָך איינגעגעבן אַרײַנצוקריגן אַ ביסל וואָפֿן פֿאַר ריזיקע פּרײַז פֿון דער אַריישער זײַט. די ידיעות, וואָס עס גרייט זיך האָבן מיר געקריגן פֿונעם קליינעם געטאָ. אַ טיײל פֿון אונדז האָבן געקריגן טעלעפֿאָנישע פֿאַרבינדונגען פֿון זייערע נאענטע, וועלכע האָבן געלעבט אויף דער אַריישער זײַט און געהאַט מגע-ומשאם מיט די דײַטשן. דער עולם איז געווען פֿאַרנומען מיטן איבערפֿירן די נויטיקע זאַכן און די לעבנסמיטל אין בונקערס. פֿרויען האָבן געוויינט און ספֿאַזמירט בײַם געזעגענען זיך מיט זייערע נאָענטסטע, ווייל יעדער הויף איז געווען באַגרענעצט מיט דער צאָל ערטער אין בונקער. די דאָזיקע סצענעס פֿון געזעגענונג אין יענע טראָגישע שעהן, מיט מענטשן מיט וועלכע מ'האָט אָפּגעלעבט אַ גאַנץ לעבן און זײַנען שפּעטער אומגעקומען, באַגלייט מיך אומעטום און קאָנען ניט אויסגעמעקט ווערן פֿון מײַן געדעכטעניש. כ'בין דאָן געשטאַנען אויף מײַן וואַכפּאָסטן אין טויער אויף זאַמענהאָף 30, ווען דער אַרײַנמאַרש פֿון די רוצחים אין געטאָ האָט זיך אָנגעהויבן. זיי זײַנען אונטער דער קאָמאַנדע פֿון זייער פֿירער בראַנדט אַרויס פֿון געפֿאַנגענערטע אויטאָס מיט ווילדן געשרײ און פֿייפֿערײ און אָנגעמאַכט אַ פּאָניק, שיסנדיק אָן אויפֿהער אין אַלע זײַטן. גרויסע עלעקטרישע לאָמפּן פֿון די אויטאָס האָבן באַלויכטן די גאַסן און מיט דעם פֿלוצלימדיקן אָנפֿאַל האָבן די רוצחים געוואָלט דעזאָריעטירן די אָרגאַניזירטע קאַמפֿס-גרופּן, ווייל באַלד האָבן אויך אָנגעהויבן קנאַלן האַרמאַטן. די שיסעריײַן האָבן אָנגעהאַלטן אַ גאַנצע נאַכט. די פֿינצטערע געטאָ איז באַלויכטן געווען פֿון די רעפֿלעקטאָרן. אונדזערע מוטיקע אויפֿשטענדלער האָבן זיך פֿאַר דעם ליכט און שיסעריי מער ניט געשראָקן און גרייט געווען אויף קדוש השם. אַ טיײל פֿון זיי האָבן זיך געפֿונעם אויפֿן באַלקאָן פֿון יידנראַט. און זיי איז טאַקע געלונגען פֿון דעם אָרט, צו וואַרפֿן אויף די אַרומשטייענדיקע דײַטשישע באַנדיטן עטלעכע בינטלעך גראַנאַטן. אַרום 200 באַנדיטן זײַנען דעמלט געפֿאַלן. דאָס איז געווען דער ערשטער סוקצעס אינעם ווידערשטאַנד פֿון וואַרשעווער געטאָ יענעם אָוונט. גענעראַל פֿאָן סטראָפּ, וועלכער האָט אָנגעפֿירט מיט דער אַקציע, זײַנעדיק די מפּלה פֿון זײַנע סאָלדאַטן, האָט באַשלאָסן די זעלבע נאַכט צו מאַכן אַ סוף פֿונעם געטאָ. אינצווישן האָט זיך געשאָפֿן פֿאַר די אויפֿשטענדלעך אַ שרעקלעכע לאַגע. אַ טיײל פֿון די יידן האָבן פֿאַרשפּעטיקט זיך אַריינצוקריגן אין זייערע בונקערס, ווייל די וואָס זײַנען געקומען פֿריער האָבן אָפּגעשלאָסן די אַריינגענג. די טראַגעדיע פֿון די בלאָנדזענדיקע איז געווען שרעקלעך און זיי זײַנען גלאָפֿן פֿון איין טויער צום אַנדערן. זיי האָבן געשריען און זיך געבעטן: לאָזט אונדז אַריין, מיר ווילן ניט אומקומען פֿון די מערדער! בײַ די מענטשן אין די בונקערס זײַנען אַנטשטאַנען חלוקי-דעות, יאָ אָדער ניט אַריינלאָזן די פֿאַרשפּעטיקטע? די אָרגאַניזאַטאָרן פֿון די בונקערס האָבן באַלויכטן די גאַסן און מיט דעם פֿלוצלימדיקן אָנפֿאַל האָבן די רוצחים געוואָלט דעזאָריעטירן די אָרגאַניזירטע קאַמפֿס-גרופּן, ווייל באַלד האָבן אויך אָנגעהויבן קנאַלן דרויסן, וועלן חס-וחלילה אומקומען דער גאַנצער בונקער. פֿײַערבראַנדן האָבן מיט איינמאָל אַרומגענומען ס'געטאָ און די אויפֿשטענדלער זײַנען אַרויס אויף זייערע פֿאָזיציעס, מיט האַנטגראַנאַטן און בלויזע הענט, אַנטקעגן די נאַצישע האָרדעס און מיט דער שבּועה פֿון נקמה אין די הערצער האָבן זיי געקעמפֿט קעגן זייערע פֿאַרטיליקער און געפֿאַלן... און אַזוי זײַנען מיט אַ העלדנטויט אומגעקומען די יידן צווישן די מויערן פֿון אונטערגייענדיקן געטאָ, יענע טראַגישע נאַכט פֿון ערב-פּסח, דעם 19טן אַפּריל, 1943.

דאָס איינפֿאַקן אַ טאָרבע פֿאַרן לויפֿן אין שוצקעלער האָט
עפּעס דערוועקט אין מיר (אויסצוג)
פֿון בני מער, פֿאָרווערטס, 25.06.2025

נעכטן האָב איך סוף-כּל-סוף אויסגעפֿאַקט די טאָרבע וואָס איז געשטאַנען צוגעגרייט לעבן דער טיר, זינט ס'איז אויסגעבראָכן די קריג צווישן ישׂראל און איראַן דעם 13טן יוני. די טאָרבע האָב איך געשווינד מיטגענומען יעדעס מאָל וואָס עס האָט זיך דערהערט אַן אַלאַרם, און כ'בין אַריינגעלאָפֿן אינעם שוצקעלער, וואָס געפֿינט זיך בערך צוויי־דריי מינוט לויפֿן פֿון מײַן שטוב אין תּל-אָביבֿ. במשך פֿון צען טעג האָט די סירענע אַלאַרמירט איין מאָל אַ טאָג אָדער אַ נאַכט, און אַמאָל איך עטלעכע מאָל אַ מעת־לעת. איך האָב שוין איבערגעלעבט אַ היפּש ביסל מלחמות אין ישׂראל אָבער כ'האָב אַזוינס נאָך קיין מאָל נישט געזען. צוריק אין דער היים, נאָך די לאַנגע וואַרטענישן אין שוצקעלער, ווען מײַן בליק איז געפֿאַלן אויף דער טאָרבע, האָב איך זיך דערמאָנט, להבדיל, אין די טאָרבעס וואָס מײַנע באָבעס האָבן אײַנגעפּאַקט מיט אַ סך יאָרן צוריק. ערב־סוכות 1939, דרײַ וואָכן נאָך דער אָקופּאַציע פֿון פּולטוסק, אַ שטעטל אין צפֿון פּוילן וווּ מײַן משפּחה האָט דורות לאַנג געלעבט, זײַנען די דײַטשן אַרײַן אין די יִדישע הײַזער און אָנגעהויבן שרײַען: „ראָוס, ראָוס!“ „זיי האָבן אונדז נישט געלאָזט נעמען גאָרנישט,“ האָט דערציילט מײַן טאַטע. „מיר זײַנען אַרויס פֿון דער שטוב אָן געלט, אָן דאָקומענטן, אָן עסן און אָן קליידער. אַראָפּגייענדיק די טרעפּ האָט מײַן מאַמע [מײַן באָבע רחל] זיך געוועגדט צו אַ דײַטשן אָפֿיציר, און געזאָגט אַז זי האָט קליינע קינדער און זי בעט ער זאָל איר לאָזן עפּעס מיטנעמען. דער דײַטש, וואָס איז מסתּמא געווען אַ מענטש, האָט זי אַוועקגעשיקט צוריק אין הויז מיט אַ זעלנער. די מאַמע האָט גענומען אַ צודעק, אַרײַנגעלייגט אַ דעק, אַ קורטקע און אַ לאַבן ברויט. זי האָט אַלץ צוגעבונדן, און דער זעלנער האָט איר מיטגעהאָלפֿן. מײַן מאַמע איז געווען אַ קליינע און אַ רונדיקע, און דאָס פּעקל איז גרעסער געווען פֿון איר.“ דרײַ יאָר שפּעטער, אין דער אַנדערער זײַט פֿון אייראָפּע, איז מײַן אַנדערע באָבע, דער מאַמעס מאַמע פֿייגע, געבליבן אַליין מיט אירע פֿיר עופֿעלעך אין אַ ליידיקן הויז אין דער יִדישער געגנט פֿון אָנטווערפּן. דאָס רובֿ יידן האָבן די דײַטשן שוין אַוועקגענומען, און מײַן באָבע האָט פֿאַרשטאַנען אַז זי קאָן נישט בליבן אויפֿן אָרט אַפֿילו נאָך איין טאָג; אַז זי מוז זיך אַריבערקריבן אין אַ נײַער דירה. האָט זי שנעל אײַנגעפּאַקט עטלעכע נייטיקע זאַכן, און אַליין איבערגעפֿירט איר משפּחה אין אַ גוישער גאַס פֿון דער שטאָט. מײַן טאַטנס משפּחה איז ניצול געוואָרן אין ראַטן-פֿאַרבאַנד, און מײַן באָבע פֿייגע און די קינדער (מײַן מאַמע בתוכם) זײַנען איבערגעבליבן אין פֿאַרשיידענע באַהעלטענישן. אָבער פֿון זיירע האָב־און־גוטס איז כּמעט גאָר נישט געבליבן: פֿון דער גאַנצער היים אין פּולטוסק בילדער פֿון דער משפּחה, און אַ פּאָר בריוו און דאָקומענטן. קיין שום אַנדער זכר איז נישט געבליבן פֿון די פֿריערדיקע לאַנגע דורות סײַ אין פּוילן, סײַ אין דער בוקאָווינע (פֿון וואַנען מײַן באָבע האָט אימיגרירט קיין בעלגיע). איך ווייס, מע קאָן נישט, און מע טאָר נישט, פֿאַרגלײַכן די בידנע פּעקלעך פֿון מײַנע באָבעס מיט מײַן אייגענער טאָרבע, וואָס איז אַפֿילו נישט קיין טאָרבע, נאָר אַ מאָדערנער זאַק. דאָס וואָס מיר האָבן איצט איבערגעלעבט איז נאָר וויניט פֿונעם חורבן. מיר האָבן אַ לאַנד, אַן אַרמיי, שוצקעלערן, פֿאַרזיכערונגען און נאָך אַ סך אַנדערע זאַכן וואָס זײַנען נישט געהאַט. אויב מײַן הויז וואָלט חלילה צעשטערט געוואָרן פֿון אַ ראַקעטע, וואָלטן מיר פֿאָרט זיך אַן עצה געגעבן.

(צוזאַמענגעשטעלט פֿון: אַלעקס דאַפֿנער)

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