



Auschwitz Jewish Center: 2010 ACTIVITIES REPORT



Dear Friends,

The year 2010 was a time of several exciting projects and events. To celebrate the Center's 10th anniversary, various concerts, performances, and workshops were held. Two new educational programs were also introduced: *Why do we Need Tolerance?*, which is the first project in Poland combining Holocaust education with anti-discrimination education and *Oshpitzin*, which is an interactive online project presenting the history of Oświęcim's destroyed Jewish community.

We are also proud of the Center's role in the first annual Oświęcim Life Festival – Festival for Peace, which included an outstanding concert by the Israeli band *Hatikva 6* – the first concert of an Israeli band ever in Oświęcim.

For the last 10 years, the Center has become part of the Oświęcim cultural and educational landscape as a place that connects locals with visitors who are mostly students, pilgrims and tourists. The Center is a place that helps construct a positive identity for Oświęcim and modify the common mutual distrust of the visitors towards locals and vice versa. However, our major role is to educate young people, chiefly, about the devastation that took place as a result of anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

I am sure that in the coming years the Center will continue to be active in the process of memory and education as well as in defining ways of commemorating destroyed communities. Please get acquainted with our 2010 report and thank you for your continuous support.

Tomasz Kuncewicz
Director

2010



Auschwitz Jewish Center:

2010 ACTIVITIES REPORT

1. Engagement photograph of David Rosenbaum and Regina Enoch, 1923. Collection of William Rosenbaum.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center (AJC) is the only Jewish presence in Oświęcim – the town the Germans called Auschwitz – which is primarily associated with the site of the darkest tragedy of the 20th century.

In September 2000, the Auschwitz Jewish Center opened its doors to honor the former residents of the town and to teach future generations about the destruction caused by the Holocaust.

Since August 2006, the Center has been affiliated with the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York.

The Center's facilities include the Jewish Museum, the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, and the Education Center.



2. Kroke at the concert celebrating 10th anniversary of AJC. Photo credit: Dominik Smolarek.

For the Auschwitz Jewish Center, 2010 was a breakthrough year in many respects. First and foremost, our 10th anniversary was celebrated together with residents of Oświęcim. A detailed account from those memorable events follows in this report.

What do hate speech and the Holocaust have in common? The subject was discussed at length by participants of our project called *Why Do We Need Tolerance?* Over 100 high school teachers and 2400 students from Małopolska and Śląsk provinces attended seminars and workshops in this first anti-discrimination education project taking place next to the former camps of Auschwitz-Birkenau.

An Israeli reggae band at the main market square in Oświęcim? Invited by the AJC, young artists from the band Hatikva 6 came to perform at the first annual Oświęcim *Life Festival*, a unique series of concerts dedicated to spreading the message of peace and tolerance. Hatikva's energetic performance gathered thousands of local residents celebrating music and diversity.

In what ways can we use internet to preserve the memory of Jewish residents of our town? Our latest online project called *Oshpitzin* suggests an answer to the question. More details are inside the report.

The above projects as well as many others were possible thanks to the tireless work of our great volunteers from Poland and beyond: Katarzyna Bugiel, Marek Kupiec, Marta Młoczek, and Monika Pisz from the State School of Higher Education in Oświęcim; Daniel Bäumer and Florian Becker from the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Service; and Thomas Decrock, Nicole Freihoff, Petra Papenfuss, Julia Preidel, and Dorothea Warneck from the EU's European Voluntary Service all helped the AJC make 2010 a remarkable year.

We welcome aboard Luisa Lehnen from Germany and Mario Schweiger from Austria who are our first new volunteers in 2011.

Jewish Museum and Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue

3. Participants of *March of the Living 2010* in front of the AJC. Photo credit: Tomasz Kuncewicz.

4. Holocaust Educational Trust group visit with Rabbi Barry Marcus. Photo credit: Danny Ghitis.



In April the AJC hosted youth groups from Australia, Israel, and the US during the *March of the Living*.

In 2010 the Jewish Museum and synagogue were visited by Barbara Prammer, Austrian politician and first female president of the National Council in the country, musicians from Israeli reggae band Hatikva 6 and outstanding performance artists: Adina Bar On from Israel and Zbigniew Warpechowski from Poland.

Each year AJC is proud to welcome former residents of Oświęcim and their families. We were touched to meet family of Ester Lahat, of blessed memory, portrayed in the *New Life* exhibition. Her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren visited our Center in August.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center regularly hosts students from the United Kingdom who come to Oświęcim within the framework of program called *Lessons from Auschwitz* with Rabbi Barry Marcus from the Holocaust Educational Trust.

In addition, a group of teachers from the Council of Europe's program: Pestalozzi Training for Education Professionals and educators from the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem came to the Auschwitz Jewish Center in May and July, respectively. In November the AJC hosted participants of the Raphael Lemkin seminar organized by The Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation.



New in our collection

In 2010, the AJC contacted Mr. Reuven Geva from Israel. Previously under the name Rubin Grubner, Mr. Geva, born in 1927 in Oświęcim, donated his family photographs and documents. Thanks to Mr. William Rosenbaum from the US whose family was connected with our town, the AJC acquired photograph collections from the Rosenbaum and Enoch families from prewar Oświęcim and Dziedzice. Two books, *Chumash* (Wilna 1937) and *Siddur Bet Yaakov* (Vienna 1937), found in one of the buildings at Prusa Street were acquired by the AJC. The volumes belonged to the home library of David Feniger. A historical plaque from the Great Synagogue found during the archeological excavation in 2004 was renovated by Jolanta Banaś-Maciaszczyk.

5. Bar mitvah of Jakób Enoch Rosenbaum in Dziedzice, 1938.
Collection of William Rosenbaum.



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Please help the Auschwitz Jewish Center preserve the history of the local Jewish community. In connection with preparation for the new core exhibition we are seeking donations of artifacts, including personal testimonies, photographs, formal and personal letters, diaries, press articles, and any other materials reflecting the history of Oświęcim's Jews before, during, and after WWII.

Anyone willing to donate or lend such materials to the AJC is kindly requested to contact:
Artur Szyndler, PhD Education and Research,
+48 33 844 70 02 szyndler@ajcf.pl

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6. Berka Joselewicza Street, c. 1920.
Collection of Łukasz Szymański.

Our longtime friends and historical collectors Mirosław Ganobis and Łukasz Szymański shared several new objects from their collections.

We thank all of our donors for sharing their artifacts, documents, and family histories with the AJC.



7. A historical plaque from the Great Synagogue in Oświęcim, under renovation.
Photo credit: Jolanta Banaś-Maciaszczyk

Education Center

The past year saw continuation of our education programs for youth and general public from Poland and beyond. Our main program for Polish students *My Former Neighbors* on Jewish culture and history of the local Jewish community, attracted school groups from all over the country.

The AJC together with the Museum of Jewish Heritage proudly continued our flagship programs for American students. In July, 14 cadets and midshipmen from US military academies took part in the AJC's *American Service Academies Program*. After preparation at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York and US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC the participants traveled to Poland for on-site study of Holocaust history. This year's program included study visits to Warsaw, Krakow, Oświęcim (Auschwitz), and small towns of the south-eastern area of Poland, formerly known as Galicia.

Six graduate students from various universities across the US and one from the UK took part in the *Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program*. The Fellows arrived to Poland after a brief orientation at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. Students stayed in Krakow, Warsaw and Oswiecim where they explored and discussed Polish-Jewish history. This year's itinerary also included numerous

field trips to Łódź, Kielce, Będzin, Bielsko-Biała, Pszczyna, and former Jewish towns of south-eastern Poland such as Bobowa, Leżajsk, Łańcut, Nowy Sącz, Pińczów, and Szydłów. In autumn of 2010 we inaugurated our new Program for Students Abroad aimed at North American students studying overseas. Within a short yet intensive program the participants visited Kraków and Oświęcim exploring rich and diverse Jewish history and learning

8. Participants of Academy Program during cleaning works at the Jewish cemetery in Oświęcim. Photo credit: Danny Ghitis.



about the Holocaust on the authentic site of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau through an in-depth study tour. Students met with a survivor of Auschwitz Mrs. Zofia Łyś and Mrs. Mirosława Gruszczyńska, a Righteous among the Nations.



9. Students of Bridge to History at meeting with Zofia Łyś, former prisoner of Auschwitz. Photo credit: Tomasz Kuncewicz.



10. Students of Bridge to History at meeting with Jakub Müller in Nowy Sącz. Photo credit: Artur Szyndler.

Why Do We Need Tolerance? was AJC's most intensive educational project of the past year. Aimed at raising awareness of contemporary dangers of prejudice and tolerance as response to the tragic experience of the Holocaust, the program brought together almost 100 teachers from Małopolska and Śląsk Regions of Poland. They attended weekend seminars which combined in-depth guided tours of former Auschwitz-Birkenau camps with lectures and workshops on new methods of anti-discrimination education in classrooms by Professor Barbara Weigl from the Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities.

and Tomek from Krakow's LGBT community who shared their experience and perspectives with our participants.

The project also included an essay contest for the best paper responding to the question posed in its name. Among numerous submissions, four works were awarded by the jury: Wioletta Karaś from Oświęcim, Karina Polak and Anna Wróbel from Wadowice, and Adrian Rogier from Siemianowice.

Why Do We Need Tolerance? has been endorsed by the Polish Ministry of Education.



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11. *Pioneers of Tolerance*, meeting with Fode Ndiaye from Senegal. Photo credit: Tomasz Kuncewicz.



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12. *Why Do We Need Tolerance?* workshop participants. Photo credit: Tomasz Kuncewicz.

The program also included a post-visit to Auschwitz and anti-discrimination workshops for high school students. After viewing Jane Elliott's famous Blue-Eyed diversity training video, almost 2400 participants throughout the year engaged in meaningful discussions about incorporating lessons from the Holocaust in their daily life and committed to fighting anti-Semitism and other manifestations of intolerance.

The project was made possible with partnership with the Roma Association in Poland and supported by a grant from Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway through the EEA Financial Mechanism and the Norwegian Financial Mechanism.

Also within the framework of *Why Do We Need Tolerance?*, a select group of 25 high-school students from Oświęcim participated in a series of multicultural workshops called *Pioneers of Tolerance*. The students invited young people from different minorities in Poland for discussions. Guests included Azat from Armenia, Jewish-Polish Nitzan, Senegalese Fode, Muslim teenagers Aga, Amin, and Asma, and Ola



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13. Prof. Barbara Weigl at *Why Do We Need Tolerance?* seminar for teachers. Photo credit: Tomasz Kuncewicz.



14. *Pioneers of Tolerance*. Photo credit: Celia Talbot Tobin.

The past year's special educational event was a two-day anti-discrimination training for police and municipal guards from Oświęcim county. A total of 14 law enforcement officers participated in workshops with AJC educators. The policemen learned about mechanisms of discrimination and ways of identifying and responding to manifestations of anti-Semitism, racism, and hate crime. Based on experiential learning and social psychology, the training inspired many interesting discussions and motivated participants to react against discrimination.

local Jewish history as well as walking tour scenario are available for download and use. The project includes publishing a hard copy guide to Jewish Oświęcim allowing a self-guided tour.

The Oshpitzin project is made possible through the generous support of the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund.

15. Honoring authors of best essays in *Why Do We Need Tolerance?* contest. Photo credit: Artur Szyndler.



16. *Why Do We Need Tolerance?* workshop participants. Photo credit: Tomasz Kuncewicz.

Keeping alive the memory about Jewish residents of Oświęcim as the last witnesses of this history are passing away is an extremely challenging task. How can we make their story meaningful to young people today who are so immersed in Facebook and YouTube?

Our latest online project *Oshpitzin* (www.oshpitzin.pl) brings an answer to these burning questions. A virtual map of prewar Jewish Oświęcim with historical synagogues, schools, and factories will speak to young people in their own language. Historical photographs and video clips with testimonies tell the story of the Jewish life in the town and its tragic end in the Holocaust. Lesson plans for teachers with workshops on Judaism and



Cultural events

The AJC brings Jewish culture and multiculturalism closer to the public through various events. Similar to previous years, selections of Polish and foreign films on Jewish themes from 2009 *Jewish Motifs Film Festival* were showcased at the Center. In total 38 movies were shown in February and March attracting many visitors from Oświęcim and beyond. In April the AJC and Kraków's Museum of Contemporary Art co-organized a performance by Agnes Janich: *Lighting the Night*. The event took place by the Sola River, close to the former KL Auschwitz.

Irek Grin and Piotr Paziński, two young Polish writers were hosted by AJC in the spring

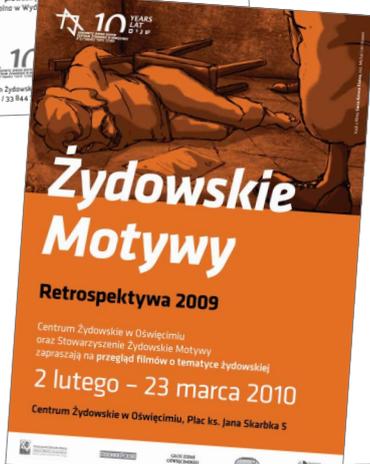
of 2010. Mr. Grin is a well-known crime fiction novelist and Piotr Paziński is a laureate of *Polityka's* (leading Polish weekly) award for his novel *Guesthouse*.

Kraków's Chief Rabbi Boaz Pash met with residents of Oświęcim at AJC in June. The summer at the Center was filled with music.

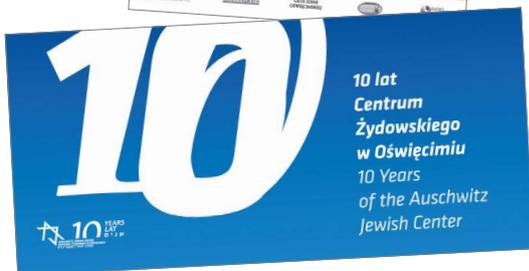
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16. Invitation for meeting with Irek Grin.

17. Flyer for Jewish Motifs Film Festival.

18. 10th anniversary invitation card.



20. *Lighting the Night* performative installation by Agnes Janich. Photo credit: Danny Ghitis.



21. Rabbi Boaz Pash at AJC. Photo credit: Dominik Smolarek.



22. Concert of Hatikva 6 at the main market square in Oświęcim. Photo credit: Danny Ghitis.

22. DJ Jungle Feelings (Warsaw Balkan Madness) at the concert celebrating 10th anniversary of AJC. Photo credit: Dominik Smolarek.

23. Mazel Tov! Cocktail Hour. Photo credit: Dominik Smolarek.



Co-organized by our Center, the Life Festival Oświęcim 2010 (www.lifefestival.pl) was the major event in the town. Israeli reggae band Hatikva 6 was invited by the Center to perform on the first day of the event at the main market square, taking Oświęcim by storm. A month later, Mazel Tov! Cocktail Hour from the US gave a concert to our visitors.

24. Adina Bar On, performance *Disposition*. Photo credit: Artur Szyndler



The AJC's 10th anniversary was the highlight of 2010. A two-day event on September 5th and 12th gathered residents of our town and other guests who joined us in celebration of our accomplishments. On the first day coinciding with the European Day of Jewish Culture, artists from Israel and Poland (Adina Bar On, Tal Alperstein, Raz Gomeh, and Adam Gruba) performed on Jan Skarbek Square in front of the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot synagogue. A week later, on the second day, we organized Rosh Hashana workshops for children, guided tours of the synagogue, and Israeli dance workshops with Awa Cybulska. The final concert featured Krakow's modern klezmer music band Kroke and DJ Jungle Feelings (Warsaw Balkan Madness). The past year concluded with a book promotion and discussion with Professor Witold Stankowski, author of *Simon Wiesenthal, A biography*.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center mourns the passing of **Jakub Mueller** and **Zofia Łyś**. They were witnesses of history who shared their difficult experiences from Auschwitz and the Holocaust influencing participants of our programs. May their memory be blessed.

PARTNERSHIPS

The education program *Why Do We Need Tolerance?* was produced in partnership with the Roma Association of Poland.

The *Jewish Motifs: 2009 Retrospective* film showcase was possible through cooperation with the Jewish Motifs Association.



Stowarzyszenie Żydowskie Motywy
Jewish Motifs Association
www.jewishmotifs.org.pl



CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS ATTENDED BY THE AJC STAFF

Anti-discrimination Training Academy, Kraków, European Association of Jewish Museums, Rome; *Intercultural and Diversity Education: Evaluating attitudes, skills and knowledge*, Council of Europe, Strasbourg, *Towards Reconciliation. Experiences, Techniques and Opportunities for Europe*, Dubrovnik; *Upbringing and political ideas of Polish scout movement*, State School of Higher Education in Oświęcim; *Minority report: monitoring hate speech on Polish Internet, Warsaw and Jewish history of Zagłębie Dąbrowskie and Górny Śląsk*, Sosnowiec.

The AJC is proud to announce that our director Tomasz Kuncewicz has been named to a new advisory committee on Holocaust education in Poland formed by Minister of Education, Katarzyna Hall.

SUPPORT

In 2010 the projects of the Auschwitz Jewish Center were made possible through generous support by:

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Staff:

Tomasz Kuncewicz – Director
Dr. Artur Szyndler – Research and Education
Maciek Zabierowski – Education
Aleksandra Kuncewicz – Administration

New York Office

Shiri Sandler – Manager
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Julia Preidel (Germany)
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The Auschwitz Jewish Center is an affiliate of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust.



www.mjhnyc.org

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Editors:

Tomasz Kuncewicz
Dr Artur Szyndler
Maciek Zabierowski

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Map of Oświęcim, Oshpitzin project: www.oshpitzin.pl

Auschwitz Jewish Center

Plac ks. Jana Skarbkka 5, 32-600 Oświęcim
telefon: +033 844 70 02 ; fax: +033 844 70 03
e-mail info@ajcf.pl • www.ajcf.pl

New York Office

Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation
36 Battery Place, New York, NY 10280
Phone: 646-437-4276; Fax: 646-437-4281
e-mail: info@ajcf.org