



Auschwitz Jewish Center

2012 ACTIVITIES REPORT



AUSCHWITZ JEWISH CENTER
CENTRUM ŻYDOWSKIE W OŚWIECIMIU
המרכז היהודי באושוויץ



Dear Friends,

Each year at the Auschwitz Jewish Center is filled with yet more exciting projects and events. **THE AUSTRIAN HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL AWARD**, which I had the privilege to receive on behalf of our Center from the Austrian Ambassador **HE Dr. Herbert Krauss**, is an important gesture of recognition of our work.

Among many projects in 2012 **OŚWIĘCIM: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE** was a special one. Almost 2,000 Polish high school students explored the history of the local Jewish community, visited *Auschwitz Museum* and reflected upon modern day challenges for creating an open and tolerant society. This unique endeavor to combine teaching history with discussions about contemporary instances of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and other forms of prejudice today met with great interest of teachers and students. We are committed to continue the program in the future as essential part of our educational mission. Independent survey by Center for Research on Prejudice at Warsaw University showed a substantial decrease in anti-Semitism and romophobia among students who participated in **OŚWIĘCIM: A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**. There couldn't be a better motivation for our work.

We continued our involvement in *Life Festival Oświęcim* an international cultural project with the mission of building peaceful relations beyond cultural and state borders, coming from from the town that neighbors the largest former Nazi German concentration and extermination camp, *Auschwitz-Birkenau*. Together with our partners: *Amnesty International* and the *Never Again Association* and the *Roma Association in Poland* we organized cultural and educational workshops to support the idea of the **LIFE FESTIVAL OŚWIĘCIM 2012**.

Another of our key accomplishments of the past year has to do with the mobile revolution. **OSHPITZIN. A GUIDE TO THE JEWISH HISTORY OF OŚWIĘCIM** is an app for iPhone/iPad and Android which employs cutting edge technology to project 3D models of the destroyed *Great Synagogue* and *Haberfeld factory* on the screen of a smartphone or a tablet. With our new app guide the *Auschwitz Jewish Center* has joined the avantgarde of most innovative museums in the world.

Thank you again for all your support!

Tomasz Kuncewicz,
Director

2012



1. Reicher family,
interwar period.
Collection of
Emil Kranz Reicher.

Auschwitz Jewish Center

2012 ACTIVITIES REPORT

The Auschwitz Jewish Center (AJC) is the only Jewish presence in Oświęcim – the town the Germans called Auschwitz – which is primarily known as 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 Oświęcim 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. Tomasz Kuncewicz, AJC Director, receives the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award from Dr. Herbert Krauss, Austrian Ambassador, and Dr. Andreas Maislinger, President of the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award.

Jewish Museum & Synagogue

On January 27, at the 67th anniversary of liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Tomasz Kuncewicz, AJC director, received the Austrian Holocaust Memorial Award on behalf of the Auschwitz Jewish Center from the Austrian Ambassador the Honorable Dr. Herbert Krauss. The award was established in 2006 by the Austrian Service Abroad. The AJC was awarded for its commitment to commemorating Oświęcim's Jewish past and conceptualizing education programs for local youth .

Among distinguished guests who visited the AJC in the past year were: [Simon Bergson](#), Chairman of the Board of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, with his wife Stefany and son Mitchel; [Nick Clegg](#), Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom; Dr. Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, the Polish Go-

vernment's Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment; Róża Thun, Polish Member of the European Parliament; and former Jewish residents of Oświęcim from Israel: Emil Kranz Reicher with family, Sabina Rosenbach, Elina Shaked with her son Shlomi, and Talia Fischer, granddaughter of Tusia Wolf, with family.



3. Emil Kranz Reicher, former resident of Oświęcim, with family during his visit to the AJC.

4. Róża Thun, Polish Member of the European Parliament, and Piotr Hertig, President of the Town Council of Oświęcim.

5. Talia Fisher with family at the *New Life* exhibition featuring her grandmother, Tusia Wolf.



The Auschwitz Jewish Center regularly hosted students from the UK who came to Oświęcim with a program of the Holocaust Education Trust called *Lessons from Auschwitz*, with Rabbi Barry Marcus. Other groups that came in 2012 included educators from the Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, participants in the Raphael Lemkin Seminar by the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Reconciliation, and future educators of the

newly established Kazerne Dossin Memorial in Belgium.

At Yom Hashoah, we hosted numerous Jewish students and adults from the United States, Israel, Australia, and other countries who came to Poland as part of the *March of the Living 2012*.

New in our collection

New important archival resources were added to our collection in the past year. These include copies of historical documents and photographs from two former residents of Oświęcim living in Israel, Emil Kranz and Henryk Schönker, and from Professor Simon J. Bronner, of the USA.

Our longtime friends from Oświęcim, Mirosław Ganobis and Łukasz Szymański, also shared with us several new objects from their private collections this year.

6-7. Emil Reicher (b. 1937).
Collection of Emil Kranz Reicher.

8. Postcard by A. Kaufman, wine merchants, Oświęcim, 1912.
Collection of Mirosław Ganobis

9. Postcard by M. Sander, textile warehouse, 7 Market Sq., Oświęcim, 1938. Collection of Mirosław Ganobis.





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10. Henry Bornstein wearing Polish army uniform, 1938.
Collection of Simon J. Bronner.

11. Emil and Shmil (in the hat) Reicher.
Collection of Emil Kranz Reicher.

Please help the Auschwitz Jewish Center preserve the history of the local Jewish community. In connection with preparation for our new Core Exhibition, we are seeking the donation 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 Dr. Artur Szyndler, +48 33 844 70 02, szyndler@ajcf.pl.

Education Center

Young Poles were asking themselves questions like „What happened at Auschwitz? Who were the Jews living in Oświęcim before the Holocaust? Is it important to stand up against discrimination?” during the *Oświęcim: A Different Perspective* program we began this year. Almost 2,000 high school students participated in this program, our largest educational initiative of the past year. A one-day study program included study visits to the Auschwitz Museum and Memorial and educational workshops on the historical context of the Holocaust and the prewar history of the Jewish community of Oświęcim/Auschwitz. In addition, closing the program with reflection discussions on

contemporary instances of anti-Semitism, xenophobia, and other forms of prejudice today helped students to make connections after their visit to Auschwitz.

Oświęcim: A Different Perspective was made possible through a generous grant from the Civic Initiatives Fund (FIO). The In-Service Teacher Training Center in Katowice was a recruiting partner for *Oświęcim: A Different Perspective*.

According to an independent survey by the Center for Research on Prejudice of the Warsaw University, participation in the program resulted in an **increase of positive feelings**

towards Jews by 19% and the same increase towards Roma by 27%. The research was organized in three stages and the last survey took place a month after the workshops, affirming the permanent character of the changes.



12. Polish promo flyer for the *Oświęcim: A Different Perspective* program.

The Holocaust and Tolerance is a two-day intensive based at the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oświęcim for educators, teachers, and police officers from all over Poland. These seminars begin with an in-depth study tour of the site of Auschwitz and Birkenau, which is then used as the starting point for a discussion on contemporary xenophobia and racial tolerance in Poland today. After the tours, participants take part in workshops dealing with stereotyping

and prejudice awareness, with particular emphasis placed on contemporary anti-Semitism, hatred of Roma, and homophobia. The level of interest shown for *The Holocaust and Tolerance* evidences a high demand for this unique seminar, which combines Holocaust education with anti-discrimination education.

Feedback from participants of *The Holocaust and Tolerance* seminar attests to the power of this method of tying the Holocaust to contemporary issues and the strength of the program itself, as the response below shows:

Thank you so much for these workshops – they were fantastic. The entire drive home we discussed what we had learned and how much we have to share with the other officers. We look forward to continuing to work together.

– Human Rights Advisor to the Commander in Chief of the Polish Police

The Holocaust and Tolerance Program is made possible with the generous support of the United States Embassy in Warsaw. The Batory Foundation provided additional support.



13. Participants of the *Holocaust and Tolerance* seminar.



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14. EURO2012 Together against Racism workshop. Bartek Łopata, Never Again Association.

15. Workshop: Weapons under Control by Amnesty International.

Dialogue Meetings are a great way to improve intergroup relations. Among the groups hosted this year, we welcomed a group of American-Jewish college students of CET Study Abroad Program, who met with their peers from the local college in Oświęcim, at the AJC.

Third annual edition of the *Life Festival Oświęcim* coincided with EURO2012, the European Soccer Championships in Poland and Ukraine. The timing provided an important opportunity to speak out about racism in sports today. In cooperation with the Never Again Association, the AJC hosted workshops for students, including *EURO2012 Together against Racism* by Bartek Łopata. Educators from *Amnesty International* also invited young people to discuss arms control and human rights in the workshop *Weapons under Control*. The Amnesty workshop

was followed a special screening of the documentary *Eyes and Ears of God* about human rights violation and the arms trade in Sudan, with film director Tomo Kriznar.

14 cadets and midshipmen from the U.S. Service Academies (U.S. Military Academy, U.S. Air Force Academy, U.S. Naval Academy, and the U.S. Coast Guard Academy) took part in the 2012 *American Service Academies Program*. After preparation at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York and the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, D.C. the participants traveled to Poland for on-site study of Holocaust history. This year's program included study trips to Krakow, Oświęcim, and small towns in south-eastern Poland, including Tarnów, Zakliczyn, and Bobowa. The program concluded with a day of hiking

16. Sara Lugo performing in Oświęcim's Market Square, *Life Festival Oświęcim 2012*.

17. Peter Gabriel performing at the *Life Festival Oświęcim 2012*.



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18. Participants of the ASAP Program in the Tatra Mountains.



19. AJC Fellows with Dr. Janina Rościszewska, Righteous Among the Nations, in front of the Rościszewski family house where 12 Jews found safety during the Holocaust, in the Będkowska Valley.



in the beautiful Tatra and Pieniny Mountains. Through a short but intensive program, the participants explored the rich and diverse Jewish history of the region and the Holocaust's implications for military leadership, as well as studying at the authentic site of KL Auschwitz-Birkenau.

Ten graduate students from various universities across the US and Canada took part in the 13th iteration of the [Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program: A Bridge to History](#) in June and July. The Fellows arrived in Poland after a brief orientation at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. The Fellows visited Krakow, Warsaw, Łódź, and Oświęcim, where they explored and discussed Polish-Jewish history. This year's itinerary also included numerous field trips, including those to Kielce – where they visited the site of the infamous 1946 pogrom and met with Bogdan Białek, head of the local dialogue group), Będzin – to visit the former Nuhim Cukerman house of prayer, renovated and preserved by local young activists, and formerly Jewish towns of south-eastern Poland including Bobowa, Chęciny, Chmielnik, Działoszyce, Pińczów, Szydłów, and Tarnów. The Fellows also heard testimony from [Dr. Janina Rościszewska, a Righteous Among](#)

[the Nations](#) who helped save 12 Jews during the Holocaust, in the actual house outside Kraków where the rescue effort took place. For the first time, Fellows met with Uwe and Gabi von Seltmann, authors of the book „My grandfather died at Auschwitz. And mine was in the SS” at the local Jewish Community Center.

To get a more in-depth understanding of the general context of Jewish history of Poland, Fellows visited the Museum of the 1944 Warsaw Uprising, the Chopin Museum, and the History Meeting House in Warsaw, as well as the Old Towns of Warsaw and Kraków.

In addition, the past year saw the continuation of the [Auschwitz Jewish Center Program for Students Abroad \(PSA\)](#). These programs provide a scholarly learning environment through which students engage intensively with the history of the Holocaust and Jewish life in Poland. The five-day program is held during the spring and fall semesters and is open to North American students studying abroad. Participants in the 2012 Programs for Students Abroad visited Krakow and Oświęcim, worked with scholars, took in-depth tours of Auschwitz-Birkenau, heard testimony, and engaged in meaningful discussions. In addition, they met with [Dr. Janina Rościszewska, a Righteous among the Nations](#). In 2012, the AJC organized three editions of this program, which included 60 participants.



I am From Here; Poland of Many Nations is an exhibition about Poland's multicultural history and contemporary Poland's little known diversity. The Auschwitz Jewish Center is a partner in this important educational project for at Polish middle and high schools. The exhibition is a joint project of the Polish-German Center, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, the Pedagogical University in Kraków, and the Kommission für die Geschichte der Deutschen in Polen e.V., Gersfeld. In the coming year, the exhibition will be presented in Oświęcim as part of the *Life Festival 2013*.



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iPhone, iPad and Android users can learn about the area's vibrant Jewish past with *Oshpitzin: A Guide to the Jewish History of Oświęcim*. Through the app, visitors can view the vanished world of synagogues, schools, stores, and meeting places that existed before the Holocaust, providing a unique immersive experience about the area's once thriving Jewish community.

Oshpitzin: A Guide to the Jewish History of Oświęcim is an audio-guide based on a map of pre-war Jewish Oświęcim. Visitors walking the streets of the town and viewing the original locations of pre-war structures can now view three dimensional models of the Great Synagogue, which was destroyed by the Nazis in 1939, and the Jacob Habersfeld Vodka and Liquor Factory, another site that did not survive. Testimonies from Holocaust survivors from Oświęcim and images of artifacts related to the sites being viewed further enhance and deepen the visitor's experience of pre-war Oświęcim. The app's Augmented Reality feature blends historical photographs into current camera

views. Standing in the Market Square in Oświęcim, the visitor's phone will show historical images of the prewar Hotel Herz where well-known Zionist Ze'ev Jabotinsky delivered a speech; the house of the town's last rabbi, Eliyahu Bombach; and the town hall, where the Jewish deputy mayor of pre-war Oświęcim, Dr. Emil Reich, had his office.



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21. Website of the exhibit: *I am From Here.; Poland of Many Nations.* www.jestemstad.pl (in Polish).

22. The 3D model of the Great Synagogue in the *Oshpitzin* app.

23. *Oshpitzin: A Guide to the Jewish History of Oświęcim* app.



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24. Scan this code with your smartphone to download the free app or visit app.oshpitzin.pl

The app is available for free download from the Apple AppStore and Google Play. *Oshpitzin: A Guide to the Jewish History of Oświęcim* was produced by the Auschwitz Jewish Center. The project was made possible by generous funding from the Dutch Jewish Humanitarian Fund and the Małopolska Region of Poland. For more information, visit www.app.oshpitzin.pl or www.facebook.com/oshpitzin.

Longing for Kalman, an uncle murdered in the Holocaust, is the theme of the Memory Project by second generation Holocaust survivor Roz Jacobs and her partner, Laurie Weisman. The art installation includes an exhibition, a documentary featuring survivor testimony, and paintings by Roz Jacobs. The project was hosted at the AJC in cooperation with the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow. Local high school and college students attended art workshops led by the artists themselves.

25. Mural featuring Martin Luther King. Quote: „In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends”. Part of the *Talking Heads* project.



Cultural events

The AJC brings Jewish culture and history to the public through various events every year. At the start of 2012, the AJC hosted Prof. Andrzej Żbikowski (Jewish Historical Institute) speaking about his recently published book, *Karski*, about the legendary courier of the Polish Government-in-exile who is known for his work disseminating information about the Holocaust to the Western World. The discussion was led by Dr. Artur Szyndler.

Selections of best Polish and foreign films on Jewish themes from the *Jewish Motifs Film Festival* were showcased at the Center. Documentaries and feature films by American, Israeli, and Polish film directors attracted 300 visitors from Oświęcim and beyond.

26. Panel discussion: *Stop the Hate Speech! Virtual Aggression, Real pain*. L-R: Dr. Marek Troszyński, Bogdan Białek, Dr. Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz, Dr. Sergiusz Kowalski, and Katarzyna Nowak

Talking Heads was the title of a special art project under the umbrella of the *Life Festival 2012*. Local young artists Tomasz Kiek and Mateusz Makarewicz created murals of famous people and their thoughts on the main idea of the Festival: building peaceful relationships, human rights, and civic responsibility. Featured on the murals were Leszek Kołakowski, Jacek Kuroń, Maria Skłodowska-Curie, Martin Luther King,

Pope John Paul II, Mahatma Gandhi, and Václav Havel. The murals were created in May 2012.

Online hate speech was the theme of the discussion panel *Stop the Hate Speech! Virtual Aggression, Real Pain*, organized by the AJC as part of the *Life Festival 2012*. The panelists included Bogdan Białek (psychologist and social activist, President of the Jan Karski Association in Kielce), Dr. Sergiusz Kowalski (sociologist), Dr. Agnieszka Kozłowska-Rajewicz (Polish Government's Plenipotentiary for Equal Treatment), and Dr. Marek Troszyński (President of the Local Knowledge Foundation, Head of the New Media Research Center at the Collegium Civitas).



Oświęcim in the era of Roman Mayzel was the title of a conference in memory of the town's pre-war mayor. Roman Mayzel (1870-1935) was remembered as a promoter of Christian-Jewish coexistence in Oświęcim. The AJC was a partner in the conference hosted in the medieval castle in Oświęcim.



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Our generations will live in the time when the Holocaust survivors are no longer with us. Meetings with the those who lived through the Shoah and are willing to talk about their experiences are a unique and precious part of the AJC's work. Batsheva Dagan, an Israeli psychologist and Holocaust educator born in Lodz and imprisoned at Auschwitz-Birkenau, met with residents of Oświęcim at the Auschwitz Jewish Center. She has developed an age appropriate method of teaching about the Holocaust to children. Her books include *Chica: A Dog in the Ghetto*, *If the Stars Could Speak*, and *Blessed be the Imagination, Cursed be It*.

27. Israeli writer and Holocaust survivor Batsheva Dagan at a meeting with residents of Oświęcim.



PARTNERSHIPS



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COALITION
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CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS ATTENDED BY THE AJC STAFF

This year, AJC staff attended conferences including: *Oświęcim in the Era of Roman Mayzel* (Oświęcim); *Janusz Korczak in Memory of Jews, Germans, and Poles* at the International Youth Meeting House (Oświęcim); *Holocaust & Human Behavior, Facing History and Ourselves International Seminar* (London); *Holocaust Education Week* (Toronto); *European Sport under Nazism, from the Olympic of Berlin to the London Olympics (1936-1948)* (Bologna); and the *III International Congress of Human Rights at the State College of Higher Education* (Oświęcim).

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2012

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www.mjhnyc.org

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ANTYSEMITYZM
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BOGU i LUDZKOŚCI



LIFE FESTIVAL

Makarewicz

Mural featuring Pope John Paul II. Quote: „Anti-Semitism is a sin against God and humanity”. Part of the *Talking Heads* project.

Auschwitz Jewish Center

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