Dear Friends,

The history of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation goes back to the late 1990s when the only surviving synagogue in Oświęcim became the first piece of Jewish communal property to be returned to a Jewish community. In 2000, we reopened that synagogue to provide a place for visitors to reflect upon and study the Jewish history of Oświęcim. In 2006, we completed the renovation of the formerly Jewish-owned Kornreich and Dattner family house, where most of the museum is located, and merged with the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York. In 2014, we opened the third renovated building – the Kluger Family House – and the renovated Jewish Museum, which presents Oshpitzin: The Story of Jewish Oświęcim. Since the very beginning, our mission has been to remember the Jewish residents of this town and to teach about the Holocaust and the dangers of hatred and xenophobia.

The new exhibit and the change it has brought to the museum are revolutionary, as Oshpitzin uniquely tells the entire forgotten history of Oświęcim. Oświęcim is primarily associated with Auschwitz, and through this exhibition, we tell the story of the town’s rich, multicultural, Jewish identity. On display are artifacts, photographs, and testimonies of former Jewish residents of Oświęcim; we are creating a living memory of Oshpitzin. In conjunction with the opening, we published the second edition of our popular guidebook, Oshpitzin: A Guide to the Jewish History of Oświęcim.

The same is true of the newly renovated Kluger Family House. Through renovation, we’ve turned the House into a space that builds dialogue and coexistence, preserving the Kluger family’s history and the House’s heritage while also looking toward the future. The Café in the Kluger House serves as a bridge between the past and the present, creating a welcoming space for visitors and locals alike.

We aim to create a model for remembrance and education about a vanished community, a model that can be replicated throughout Europe in the places where Jewish communities were destroyed in the Holocaust.

With many thanks to all of you who contributed to making this year of incredible projects possible,

Tomasz Kuncewicz
Director
Auschwitz Jewish Center

2013-2014 ACTIVITY 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 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, the Education Center, and Café Bergson in the Kluger Family House.
Jewish Museum & Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue

The past two years have been pivotal to the history of the AJC. During this period, we launched a new minimalist and modern core exhibition, Oshpitzin: The Story of Jewish Oświęcim, which has changed our museum radically, and rescued and renovated the home of the last Jewish resident of Oświęcim, Szymon Kluger, turning it into Café Bergson.

The new Jewish Museum, Café Bergson, and the Kluger Family Home were officially inaugurated on May 18, 2014 with special guests including Dr. David G. Marwell, the Director of the Museum of Jewish Heritage in New York, representatives of the local government and NGOs, and friends of the AJC. Former Jewish residents of Oświęcim came from Israel to be our honored guests. A Polish musician, Karolina Cicha, performed her musical program, Greetings from Yiddishland.

In a very moving ceremony, Rabbi Avi Baumol and Shlomi Shaked, whose mother was born and raised in Oświęcim, affixed a mezuzah to the doorframe of Café Bergson.

Since its opening, visitors to the Center have had the opportunity to connect with Oświęcim’s pre-war Jewish life through the new core exhibition Oshpitzin: The Story of Jewish Oświęcim, which tells this powerful story through photographs, artifacts, and survivor testimony. In the exhibition, photographs of individuals and families, documents and artifacts from local Jewish organizations and businesses, and the Judaica excavated in 2004 from beneath the site of the Oświęcim Great Synagogue bring to life the vital Jewish
In the backyard of the Jewish Museum stands the rescued and renovated home of Szymon Kluger, the last Jewish resident of Oświęcim. Following a complicated process that included the demolition of nearby outbuildings, securing the slope upon which the Kluger Family House and the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot stand, and an extensive remodel of the interior, the House has been adapted as a cafe and temporary exhibition space for various art and cultural projects.

Noted Visitors

On November 18, 2013, Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary General, visited the Jewish Museum and Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue, accompanied by Yehoshua Ellis, Rabbi of Katowice and Upper Silesia, following their visit to the former camps of Auschwitz and Birkenau. It was the first visit by a UN Secretary General to the AJC and to Oświęcim.

The Secretary General discussed the UN’s work on genocide prevention, tolerance, and peace while at the Center and said, “I am honored to visit this synagogue and learn about Jewish life in Poland before the cataclysm of the Holocaust. I am especially impressed to see the staying power of Jewish tradition and the rebirth of Jewish life. Coming at the end of a deeply moving visit to the Nazi death camp, I leave Auschwitz saddened but also with the hope, determination to build this world of equality, human dignity and peace.” We were honored by his visit and his commitment to advance peace.

Following the 69th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz and Birkenau, former U.S. House Majority Leader Eric Cantor, Representative Darrell Issa, and Representative Carolyn Maloney joined US Ambassador Stephen...
Mull and Consul General Ellen Germain in a visit to the Jewish Museum and the Chevra Lomdei Mishnayot Synagogue.

In August 2014, CNN’s Wolf Blitzer visited the Jewish Museum, Cafe Bergson, and Oświęcim to research his family’s roots in the town. Mr. Blitzer is a second generation Holocaust survivor; he visited the AJC as part of the CNN documentary series Roots: Our Journeys Home. The episode about Blitzer aired in October 2014.

In 2013 and 2014, we were honored to host many former Jewish residents of Oświęcim and their descendants, including Sam Rosenberg, Haim Horowititz, Henryk Schönker, Różia Borenfreund, Hanna Goldberg, Menachem Bodner, Elina Shaked, and Rachel Jakimowski with her daughters: Rivka Bialystok and Tzipi Nevo.

The Auschwitz Jewish Center hosted regular visits with students from the UK who came to Oświęcim with the Lessons from Auschwitz program of the Holocaust Education Trust with Rabbi Barry Marcus. Other noteworthy visiting groups included French guests accompanying France’s Chief Rabbi, Haim Korsia; educators from Yad Vashem in Jerusalem; participants in the Raphael Lemkin Seminar by the Auschwitz Institute for Peace and Rec-
onciliation; and participants in Jagiellonian University’s International Summer School, Teaching about the Holocaust.

On 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. In May 2014, we also hosted Trustees of Brandeis University in Waltham, MA, with President Frederick M. Lawrence and Professor Antony Polonsky.

Partnerships and Awards

In 2013, AJC was honored with the 2013 Oświęcim Year of Culture Award by the Town of Oświęcim for our “contribution to active participation in culture, strengthening of local identity, promoting the town of Oświęcim, and raising the aesthetics of public space”. Also in 2013, we joined the Polish Coalition for Anti-Discrimination Education, which connects various organizations advocating a greater emphasis on tolerance education in the Polish school system.

In 2013 and 2014, we proudly partnered with the Matzevah Foundation, headed by Steven D. Reece, whose volunteers spend a week each year in Oświęcim working on the maintenance of the Oświęcim Jewish cemetery. Foundation volunteers have come to Poland since 2005 to serve as caretakers of Jewish cemeteries.

New in our collection

While making Oshpitzin, we were fortunate to discover previously unknown documents and photographs depicting local Jewish life before the Holocaust. The new artifacts were acquired from the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, USHMM in Washington D.C., the State Archives in Katowice, the National Archives in Kraków, the Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw, the Institute of National Remembrance in Kraków, the Princes Czartoryski Library, and private collections of Haim Horowitz and Rózia Borenfreund.

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

Please help the Auschwitz Jewish Center preserve the history of the local Jewish community. We continue to collect 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. Please contact Dr. Artur Szyndler at +48 33 844 70 02 or szyndler@ajcf.pl.


15. Census of Oświęcim County in 1620 which lists the number of Jews in Oświęcim and their taxes paid to the Duke in the form of pepper and saffron or cash. Collection of the National Archives in Krakow.
Our flagship programs for international students have continued to flourish. Our oldest program for international students, the *Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows Program: A Bridge to History*, brought more than 20 graduate-level students and faculty Fellows to Poland to study Polish-Jewish history, the Holocaust, and issues of Holocaust narrative and memory. In 2013, we opened the Fellowship to faculty members who teach the Holocaust but have not made it their primary area of study.

Through our newest signature program, the *Auschwitz Jewish Center Program for Students Abroad*, more than 200 college-age students have studied the Holocaust and Jewish life in Krakow and Oświęcim in scholarly, long weekend programs. In 2013 and 2014, we began to offer customized programs for universities interested in bringing their students to Poland for this study.

The American Service Academies Program reached its tenth year in 2014. The program continues to work with cadets and midshipmen from the U.S. Air Force, Naval, Coast Guard, and Military Academies. These students go on to positions of leadership in the United States Armed Forces.

In addition to continuing its flagship programs, the AJC has reinforced its position as a leader in providing education about the Holocaust and human rights to law enforcement officers.

From May 15-17, 2013 a group of 20 Human Rights Advisors of the Polish Police attended the expert *Holocaust & Tolerance Seminar* at the
Understanding Evil workshops for law enforcement officers.

Although Auschwitz Jewish Center. This special program was designed to address the legacy of the Holocaust and contemporary challenges.

“The recent economic crisis has created fertile ground for xenophobic and anti-Semitic acts,” explains Lt. Col. Krzysztof Łaszkiewicz, Human Rights Advisor to the Commander in Chief of the Polish Police. “As members of the law enforcement community, we have to understand the social dynamics of prejudice to effectively prevent and combat acts of racial hatred.”

In the December iteration of the Holocaust and Tolerance seminar, 20 chiefs of county police from the Province of Małopolska took part.

“I have come to understand that the Holocaust was a process which was accepted by many,” said one of the participating officers. “That’s why we have to respond to every single manifestation of racism before it grows into something uncontrollable.”

In December 2014, we proudly expanded Holocaust & Tolerance into a formalized partnership with the police and inaugurated the most extensive project for Polish police leadership in our history. Called Understanding Evil, it’s the first program of this kind in Europe where high-ranking officers explore the Holocaust in order to gain an in-depth understanding of modern day hate crimes.

Two hundred commanding officers from all over Poland will attend the seminars over two years, thanks to the partnership with the Commander-in-Chief of the Polish Police. In a letter to the participants of the first seminar in December 2014, Professor Irena Lipowicz, Polish Ombudswoman, stressed how racism and intolerance are a threat to human dignity and the public order.

Understanding Evil seminars are made possible through the support of EEA Grants with additional support from the US Consulate General in Kraków.
Café Bergson

Our annual screening of selected films from the Jewish Motifs International Film Festival brings hundreds of guests to the AJC. In February 2013, we showed 10 films from Poland, the US, and Israel.

On May 18, 2013, the AJC opened its doors after nightfall to celebrate the Night of Museums in Oświęcim. Local visitors took guided tours of the synagogue and the core exhibit of the Jewish Museum. A special art workshop, Drawing in the Synagogue, was held for children.

Café Bergson, a vegetarian café in the 100-year-old Kluger Family House, serves local products and is a modern, inviting space for cultural events and dialogue. The renovation of the Kluger house was an opportunity to take an innovative approach to commemoration and education about the destroyed Jewish community of Oświęcim; the final result goes far beyond nostalgia and engages visitors and locals alike in discovering history and memory today.

In 2014, the café was shortlisted as one of Poland’s best interiors by leading Polish home design website domosfera.pl.
Cultural Events

As part of our partnership with the Life Festival Oświęcim, in June 2013, we brought the mobile exhibition I Am From Here: Poland of Many Nations to Father Skarbek Square. The exhibition focuses on national and ethnic minorities in Poland, presenting profiles of individuals from a broad range of backgrounds. The project was created by the Association Polish-German Center and the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, in partnership with the AJC. In June 2014, Life Festival Oświęcim celebrated its fifth anniversary. Among the bands featured was the American-Israeli group Balkan Beat Box, famous for their Mediterranean-influenced music that incorporates Jewish, Eastern European (mainly Balkan), Middle Eastern traditions, Gypsy punk, and electronica. Israeli band ICE9 (Kerach 9), known for their members’ use of Holocaust-era writing as lyrics and Hebrew variations on Polish music, performed at the final concert of the Life Festival Oświęcim 2014.

In November 2013, popular children’s author Renata Piątkowska launched her book, All My Mothers, at the Center. The book tells the story of Irena Sendler and the children she saved,
focusing on Szymon Bauman, a young Jewish boy living behind the ghetto wall, published in partnership with the AJC. The book launch was attended by pupils from the 4th Primary School in Oświęcim.

On May 17, 2014, our Jewish Museum again participated in the Night of Museums in Oświęcim together with other local institutions. On that memorable night, Oświęcim residents and other guests were the first visitors to the new core exhibit Oshpitzin: The Story of Jewish Oświęcim and the renovated Kluger Family House with its temporary photographic exhibition, The Land of Os, by New York photographer Danny Ghitis. Our youngest audience attended a children’s workshop on the exodus story called Lion Ari Needs Your Help!

On May 18, 2014, we officially inaugurated Café Bergson in the historic Kluger Family House. Stephany and Simon Bergson made the generous sponsor gift for the renovation in memory of Henri-Louis Bergson (1859-1941), a philosopher of Polish heritage and the Nobel Prize Laureate in 1927, as well as survivors of Auschwitz Milton Bergson and Nadzia Goldstein Bergson from Ciechanów, Poland. The renovation was also made possible, in part, by the generous support of the Kickstarter community. The design and execution of the renovation was supervised by Susul&Strama Architects from Oświęcim.

Café Bergson’s extensive calendar of cultural programs launched in September 2014 with film screenings, including Hagshama by Barbara Maroń, the selection of 12 acclaimed films from the Jewish Motifs Film Festival, and Nach Auschwitz (After Auschwitz).
Café Bergson’s children’s’ program has become famous in Oświęcim. The Café is a certified Child Friendly Place where local art groups like Kwadryga from Bielsko-Biała or MaMa Foundation perform for the youngest art lovers. Our theatrical workshops include stories about the Tailor Boy and Magical Mill as well as educational workshops like Hanukkah: The Festival of Lights and Winter Holidays.

Among the Café’s most innovative programs is Bring Your Own Food, a series of events for those interested in vegetarian and vegan food. Participants bring their own meals and raise funds for the local animal rights NGO in Oświęcim.

Our café is also a unique space for promoting songwriters from Poland and beyond.

The artists who have performed at Café Bergson include Elin Ey (Iceland), Myrra Rós (Iceland), Graftmann, Phillip Bracken (Australia), Peter J. Birch, Asia i Koty, and Sonia pisze piosenki.

Each week our European volunteers invite young residents of Oświęcim to language discussion clubs, English Café at Café Bergson and Deutsches Café im Café Bergson.

Our successful projects would not be possible without a team of amazing young people from Poland, Europe, and Israel who worked with us as volunteers in the past two years: Dominik, Glib, Johannes, Shlomi, Nika, Iga, Michael, Emily, Anya, Mikhail, Gesine, and Klaudia. Thank you again for being with us during this pivotal time.
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The Auschwitz Jewish Center is an affiliate of the Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in New York

[www.mjhnyc.org](http://www.mjhnyc.org)

Please support the Auschwitz Jewish Center. For more information please contact the AJC in New York at www.ajcf.org or 646-437-4276. The Foundation is a registered not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization.

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