

News from *Remember Us*

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Organizational
developments



Summer
2011

"So long as we live they too shall live, for they are part of us as we remember them"



Remember Us
The Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project

About Remember Us

Remember Us offers invitations to young people to voluntarily embrace the legacy of Holocaust remembrance as a source of motivation, empowerment, and self-development. The **Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project** invites each child preparing for bar/bat mitzvah to *remember* one specific child who was lost in the Holocaust and *act* for the good in his/her name. **I Will Remember: The Righteous Conversations Project** provides a setting for today's teens to engage with Holocaust survivors and together shine a light on the broken places in today's world.

Current Status

In the past 12 months 2,957 more young people have received names from Remember Us. To date over 16,000 children have participated, at 653 congregations. Participation is voluntary. There is no charge.

The concept has been endorsed by all Jewish denominations.

REMEMBER US

Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project
**I Will Remember: The Righteous
Conversations Project**

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First Public Event for New Program

Remember Us launched a new program this Spring, **I Will Remember: The Righteous Conversations Project**. The goal is to create a safe and supportive environment in which teens and survivors can work together to shine a light on issues of suffering in today's world. The program builds on the moral authority of the survivors and the teen's natural commitment to fairness, justice and compassion. Together they reframe a young person's encounter with the Holocaust as a source of motivation and activist community. The program includes public meetings, workshops,

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Dr. Michael Berenbaum, noted Holocaust scholar and author, and a Remember Us Board member, presents the keynote address for the evening.

Sabbath Candles and GameBoys

By Gesher Calmenson, Founder

Anyone who has spent time with our kids pre-, during, or post-bar/bat mitzvah can attest to how awesome they are. In any classroom one will find all the virtues—humor, intelligence, seriousness, creativity, generosity, judgment, caring.

After eight years I am handing **Remember Us** over to the next generation of stewards who will serve the rising generations of Jewish young people. I would like to share with them and you what I hoped **Remember Us** could offer these remarkable children, and what contribution it can make to their future.

In the epilogue to the documentary *The Long Way Home*, Rabbi Harold Schulweis provides a compelling image: we don't want to give our children the Holocaust legacy to carry as a heavy stone. My own experience attests to this possibility. I was about 11 years old when I learned about the Holocaust. No one provided a way for me and my peers to come to terms with the unthinkable, and maybe no way existed in 1945. The facts were too raw, incomprehensible, horrible. Fifty years later, as a Jewish educator I saw that although there was much teaching about the Holocaust, little of it helped children close the emotional distance and identify their own place in the chain of memory. Teaching them to identify with a "victimology" did not serve them well. The question was how to make the inevitable

encounter with the Holocaust an opportunity for self-esteem, appreciation, and compassion—an experience of empowerment. From this was born the Holocaust Bnai Mitzvah Project.

Our ongoing question is: empowerment for

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Board and Staff Changes

Remember Us continues to grow in impact, outreach and programming. We are honored and delighted to announce a number of changes.

Samara Hutman has guided the work of Remember Us as Board President for the past three years. Beginning on July 1, she takes over the reins as the organization's new Executive Director, replacing Gesher Calmenson, the founder of Remember Us.

Our Board of Directors welcomes new members, whose names are in bold in the following list:

Michael Berenbaum, Ph.D.	Helen Jacobs Lepor, Treasurer
Rochel Blachman, Secretary	Rabbi Stan Levy
Cece Feiler	Harry Pelz
Linda Gerard	Sheryl Sokoloff
Ruth Goldberg	Barbara Tobin, President

We are excited about the new growth and programs to expand on the Remember Us mission.



A panel of survivors and teens addresses the audience. From left to right: Lara Sokoloff, Helen Freeman, Eva Brettler, Rebecca Hutman, Marie Kaufman and Marissa Lepor.



Helen Freeman shows a teen the tattooed prisoner number she was given at Auschwitz.

I Will Remember

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and the production of public service videos addressing contemporary issues

The project's initial offering was a public meeting on February 16 event at Harvard-Westlake School in Los Angeles. A second public event was held on May 2, an evening at IKAR, a Jewish spiritual community also in Los Angeles.

At the end of June, **I Will Remember** piloted its first five-day summer workshop. Teens and survivors worked together on ways to shine a light on today's issues in the light of the survivors experience, through the use of modern media. The workshop was held at Harvard Westlake School, led by Cheri Gaulke, HW Art Chair and filmmaker, and HW alumni Nick Lieberman and Gabe Benjamin. Participants

created public service announcements for release this coming fall. Teens Jamie Feiler and Gabe Benjamin are the crew for a mini-documentary to be made this summer under the direction of Gaulke. ■



Survivors in the audience respond to a question from the panel.

Sabbath Candles and GameBoys

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what? Memory is fulfilled when it motivates behavior. It is a principle of Remember Us not to require any specific action, so we do not promote any causes. Our hope is that young people who participate will find their own *tikkunim*, actions that they take in the world in the name of those who they remember. The creative responses of our young people to this challenge has been gratifying.

Now as I am coming to the close of my tenure I am thinking about a more specific and timely consequence. A study by the Kaiser Family Foundation published last year reported that youngsters ages 11–14 on average spend twelve hours each day focused on media. That is 75% of their waking hours. The implications are being actively debated about this being a good thing (broad networks of friends and information) or a bad thing (social isolation and information overload).

But one fact is clear: screened reality is not real life. No electronic device can help a young person cultivate the human qualities of *empathy* and *intimacy*. For this we need engagement with each other. The Shabbat candles are a metaphor for this—always a pair, not only to amplify the light, but also so that each candle illuminates its partner.

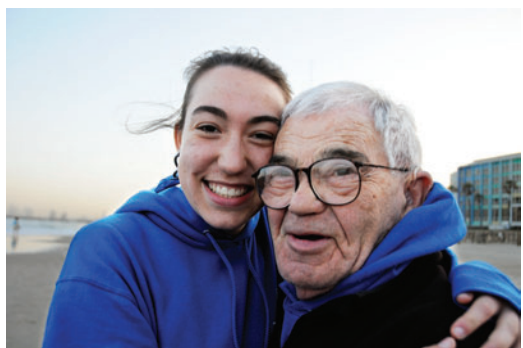
To remember a child who died in the Holocaust, a child we never knew, creates a relationship. It makes no demands and has no expectations except self-directed memory. But in this simple act, both intimacy and empathy are cultivated. When a young person brings these qualities into the world, everyone's life is improved and even the child who was lost has touched the future.

The early cohort of participants has grown up and inspired the creation of **I Will Remember: The Righteous Conversations Project**. Teens and survivors are meeting, engaging, forming bonds, and together shining a light on their mutual concerns for today's world, close to home and in distant lands.

In this way the **Remember Us** concept is continuing to reframe our relationship to past tragedies as motivation for building the Jewish future—cultivating in our young people a commitment to strength, justice, empathy and compassion. I give over the future of the organization to its new Executive Director and expanded Board with confidence that they will exemplify these same qualities and with the blessing to fulfill the potential of what has been begun. ■

Remembrance on Teen Trip to Camps

For the second year, teens carried with them the names of lost children supplied by Remember Us as they visited Holocaust and other sites in Europe. March of the Living groups from New York, New Jersey, Los Angeles, and Florida, and the Shelhevet group from San Francisco carried a total of 440 names. Each name was carried as part of each child's nametag. Staff also participated. During the coming year we will be working to expand outreach of the Remember Us concept to include more March of the Living and other teen trips. ■



A Family Promotes Participation in Remember Us

A participating family is helping spread the word about Remember Us in their synagogue, in their community, and internationally. Alex and Jake Green remembered two boys lost in the Shoah, Hans Ament and Bronislaw Honig, at their B'nai Mitzvah in May, 2011. They created a unique invitation (see below).

The family found new ways to raise awareness of Remember Us. They manned a booth at their temple's "Mitzvah Alley" at an annual food festival in their town, providing materials on Remember Us to

the attendees. And they are raising funds themselves by auctioning items and by participating in a web-based program that donates 10% of what they or anyone else purchases if they choose Remember Us as the donation recipient.

Alex and Jake's father's family is from Panama and after seeing Remember Us referenced in the B'nai Mitzvah invitation, a cousin introduced Remember Us to his Panamanian congregation. We've already

received requests for names from them. The Green family reminds us of what a very small and wonderful world, full of caring individuals, that we live in today. ■



Teen Programming

We believe that the sincerity, commitment, and experience of the young men and women who have participated in Remember Us makes them the best advocates for this concept of memory. Earlier this year we piloted a program to have a teen bring Remember Us to the younger students at his school and synagogue. Noah Gerard-Grossman spoke with 6th grade students at Brandeis-Hillel Day School and students and their parents at Congregation Emanu-El, both in San Francisco. He talked about the reasons to participate, the opportunity, and ways to make one's own experience unique. Noah reports that the sessions generated active interest, lots of questions for him to answer from his own experience, and an excitement about participating for most of the students.

This year's test of the idea will be used as the basis for an on-line Teen

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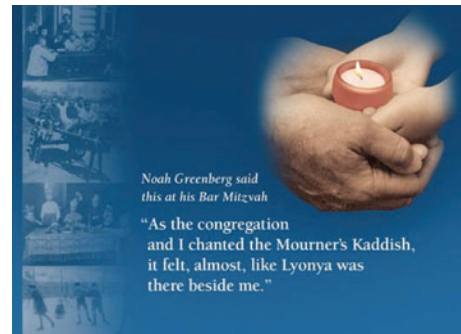
Teen Programming

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Mentor Handbook which will be made available to teens when they receive their on-line Yahrzeit reminders, another program started this year. On a date selected by the participant, Remember Us sends an annual reminder to remember the specific child whose name they accepted. Dates can be either a birth date, anniversary of the bar/bat mitzvah, or a date on the Jewish calendar. In the mailer for this year, Geshar Calmenson wrote the following to the teens:

“Mazal tov on the anniversary of your Bar Mitzvah this month. When you chose to remember (name of remembered child) z”l, you did something amazing—you transformed a fragment of history into a living, personal memory. By this simple act you take your place as a guardian of the Jewish past and a voice for the Jewish future.

“We hope that you will keep this memory in mind whenever you do anything good in the world. The blessings that flow through you add a new chapter to the life story that was cut off too soon. Doing a mitzvah in someone’s name is spoken of as a *mitzvah b’shem*, a righteous act done in



Noah Greenberg said this at his Bar Mitzvah

“As the congregation and I chanted the Mourner’s Kaddish, it felt, almost, like Lyonya was there beside me.”

the name of the person you are honoring. Just saying the words, even to yourself, adds another dimension of meaning.” ■

New Participating Communities Since November

Remember Us welcomes the following communities at which the Remember Us Project is made available to bar/bat mitzvah students. May they go from strength to strength.

Australia

Sydney
Jewish Learning Centre
Sydney
South Head District
Synagogue

Canada

Manitoba
Winnipeg
Shaarey Zedek
Synagogue

Israel

Kfar Saba
Beit Hakneset
Dvir Yehonatan

Mexico

Mexico City
Comunidad Bet-El

United Kingdom

Middlesex
Northwood and Pinner
Liberal Synagogue
Oxford
Oxford Jewish
Congregation

Panama

Panama City
Shevet Achim
Paitilla
Ahavat Sion

Switzerland

Zurich
ICZ

United States of America

Arkansas

Bentonville
Congregation Etz
Chaim
Fayetteville
Temple Shalom
Little Rock
Temple B'nai Israel

Arizona

Phoenix
Temple Chai

California

Encino
Adat Chaverim
Palo Alto
Kol Emeth
San Diego
Chabad Carmel Valley
Santa Clarita
Temple Beth Ami

Connecticut

Stamford
Temple Sinai
Westport
Chabad Lubavitch of
Westport

Florida

Boca Raton
March of the Living,
Southern Region
Coral Springs
Temple Beth Chai
Miami
Shaarey Tefilah
Bet Breira Samu-El Or
Olom
Ponte Vedra Beach
Beth El

Illinois

Evanston
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Congregation
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North Suburban
Synagogue
Lombard
Congregation Etz
Chaim
Olympia Fields
Temple Anshe Shalom

Kansas

Wichita
Hebrew Congregation

Massachusetts

Andover
Temple Emanuel
Lexington
Temple Emunah
Sharon
Kol Tikvah

South Easton
Temple Chayai Shalom

Michigan

Grosse Pointe Woods
Grosse Pointe Jewish
Council

New Jersey

East Whippany
March of the Living,
New Jersey & New
York

Edison

Temple Emanu-El

Flemington

Flemington Jewish
Community Center

Franklin Lakes

The Barnert Temple
(Congregation B'nai
Jeshurun)

Manalapan

Temple Beth Shalom

Metuchen

I.L. Peretz Community
Jewish School

Parsippany

Temple Beth Am

Tinton Falls

Monmouth Reform
Temple

New York

Armonk
Congregation B'Nai
Yisrael
Binghamton
Temple Concord

Brooklyn

Kingsbrook Jewish Med
Center Synagogue

Brooklyn

Park Slope Jewish
Center

Monticello

Temple Sholom

Port Washington

Temple Beth Israel

Rockville Centre

Central Synagogue of
Nassau County

Ohio

Solon

Solon Chabad

Oklahoma

Tulsa

Congregation Etz
Chaim

Pennsylvania

Abington

Old York Road Temple -
Beth Am

Bensalem

Congregation Tifereth
Israel

Erdenheim

Beth Tikvah-B'nai
Jeshurun

Washington

Bellevue

Bet Alef

Teen Inspires New Remember Us Program

A young man in Pennsylvania brought a special sense of intimacy to his remembrance of a child lost in the Holocaust. Spencer Dodge and his family requested the name of a young man who was born on the same date as himself. In addition to remembering Levik Sternin at his bar mitzvah, Spencer also created the beginnings of a new ritual of remembrance. He found a way—an embroidered panel—to incorporate his remembered child's name so that he will remember him whenever he puts on his tallit.

Remember Us has researched the halachic implications and has determined that this can be an appropriate addition to acts of remembrance. Over the coming year, we hope to make it available to both participating children and to adults.

Spencer's younger sister intends to join this process of remembrance and, following her brother's lead, will also be earning her own money to donate to Remember Us. ■



The embroidered panels sewn into Spencer's tallit



The tallit bag, made from patches from jeans of the entire family

27 January 2011

Dear Ms. Cohen,

My name is Spencer Dodge and I will become a Bar Mitzvah this March 26, 2011. My mother was in contact with you a few months ago, asking for a name of a child to honor and remember on my Bar Mitzvah. You sent me the name of a boy, Levik Sternin, born on February 1st, 1936. Levik was born on my birthday day February 1st, and in the same year my grandma Toby was born. Levik was killed with his mother at only five years old, so he did not become a Bar Mitzvah. We are two children, both boys, both Jewish, both born on February 1st, but with very different opportunities and lives.

I am remembering Levik on my Bar Mitzvah day by writing about him in the pamphlet I am sharing with my congregation, dedicating the Mourner's Kaddish to him, having his name printed inside my Tallit, and by donating \$54 to Remember Us to help keep this program running. Thinking about what happened to Levik is scary, because it could have been me, or my cousin, or someone I knew. What if I was born in 1936 in Riga, and he was born in 1998 in Pennsylvania? I want to remember and to get others to remember the tragedies, so they will not happen again.

I earned the \$54 myself by dog sitting and doing other various odd jobs. Enclosed is my check to Remember Us for the \$54. Also, here is a picture of my Tallit!

Thank you for giving me this honor.

Sincerely,

Spencer Dodge
Spencer Dodge

A Family History

At Remember Us we don't often have the opportunity to know the history of an entire family. Recently we were introduced to a family that was almost entirely wiped out in the Holocaust. We share this information with you as an example of the tenuous thread by which Jewish survival has hung. Nothing more clearly illustrates to us the need for remembrance than the history of the Yeger family. ■

- Shmuel Yeger Born 1901 – died 1944 Auschwitz
- Freida Ita Yeger Born 1902 – died 1944 Auschwitz
- Faiga Yeger Born 1925 – died 1944 Auschwitz
- Yerme Yeger Born 1927 – died 1944, died on a death march
- David Yeger Born 1929 – alive, was in Auschwitz and transferred and survived
- Sura Nessa Yeger Born 1930 – died 1944 Auschwitz
- Zalel Yeger Born 1932 – died 1944 Auschwitz
- Zipra Yeger Born 1934 – died 1944 Auschwitz



At his bar mitzvah, Zack Yeger remembered his grandfather David's younger brother, Zalel. Names of the other family members are being sent to the archives at Yad Vashem.

Our Sincere Thanks to These Recent Supporters of the Remember Us Project

November 2010–May 2011

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Congregation Ohr Tzafon
Shaari Emeth

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