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Holocaust Memorial Center Announces New Exhibit “The Girl in the Diary: Searching for Rywka from the Łódź Ghetto,” July 29 – December 30

Exhibit Focuses on Women During the Holocaust as Seen Through a Polish Teenager’s Diary

Farmington Hills, Mich., July 15, 2021 – “The Girl in the Diary: Searching for Rywka from the Łódź Ghetto,” an exhibition at the [Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus](#) in cooperation with the Galicia Jewish Museum, Kraków, Poland, will be on display from July 29 through December 30, 2021.

In 1945, a Soviet doctor found a school notebook in the liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau Camp. It was a diary written by Rywka Lipszyc, a teenager in the Łódź Ghetto, between October 1943 and April 1944. The contents were the testament of a Jewish girl who lost her siblings and parents, but never lost hope despite moments of doubt. More than 60 years after its discovery, the diary traveled to the United States, where it was translated from Polish, supplemented with commentaries and published in book form.

Rywka Lipszyc’s diary, a moving memoir of life and adolescence in the Łódź Ghetto, is the starting point for this exhibition. Selected excerpts of the diary are supplemented by expert commentary from historians, doctors, psychologists and rabbis. These commentaries help to understand the context of the times and events Rywka refers to in her diary.

“Rywka’s Holocaust experience is a compelling story because it gives us insight into the individual experiences of so many others. Her daily struggles, interests, and fears allow us to get to know Rywka as a person, not a statistic. We are very fortunate to have this exhibit on display at our museum,” said Holocaust Memorial Center Education Director Ruth Bergman.

The exhibition also includes unique historical artifacts and documents from museums in Poland, the United States, Israel, Germany and Belgium. Historical objects from the Łódź Ghetto and Chełmno (Kulmhof) Death Camp are on loan from the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Poland. These provide a moving testament documenting the personal dimensions of the Holocaust.

“Objects like this are especially important as the years continue to pass,” said [Derek Hastings](#), an associate professor of history at Oakland University. “They remind us once again that despite the massive scope of the Holocaust, the individual victims were anything but faceless. Rywka's deeply personal reflections — especially regarding her faith — are poignant and moving.”

On Wednesday, Sept. 1, Hastings will speak about the time in history when Rywka penned her diary. His lecture, titled “A Girl Lost, A Diary Found: Life in the Łódź Ghetto,” gives an up-close and historical perspective on the brutal conditions of the Łódź ghetto. The lecture begins at 7 p.m. at the Holocaust Memorial Center, which is located at 28123 Orchard Lake Road in Farmington Hills. The program also will be streamed live on the Holocaust Memorial Center website, <https://www.holocaustcenter.org/>. To register to attend the lecture in-person or virtually via Zoom, visit <https://www.holocaustcenter.org/diary>.

The story presented in the exhibition is mainly, but not exclusively, the story of women. Traditionally, most of the wartime narratives and memories of the German occupation concentrate on the fate of men — soldiers, politicians, leaders. In Rywka’s world, the perspective is the opposite. Men appear in the diary, but remain in the shadows, in the background. They are present, but not dominant.

The world we get to know from Rywka’s diary is populated by women and its structure is created by relations between them. It is filled with their pain and longing, courage, daily battles, and their fear.

“Told from a woman’s perspective, we gain insight into the daily horrors Rywka and other women faced in the Łódź Ghetto, while at the same time showed their unwavering religious faith and hope for the future,” said Bergman.

In order to not interfere with this unique narrative, all of the commentaries used to supplement the text of the diary were also prepared by women. The design of commentaries complementing the diary is adapted from the traditional Jewish method of explaining and interpreting sacred texts. In this symbolic way, the exhibition also refers to Rywka’s devotion to the tradition in which she grew up, to her unwavering faith in God and God’s care.

Presenting Sponsors for the exhibit are Judy and Sam Jassenoff. Lead sponsors are Robin & Leo Eisenberg, The Karp Family, Jackie & Larry Kraft, Michael Liebowitz, In Memory of Nancy & James McLernon, and Brianna Yuille.

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About the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus

The Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus is a 55,000 square foot museum and Library Archive in Farmington Hills that teaches about the senseless murder of millions and why each of us must respect and stand up for the rights of others if we are to prevent future genocide

and hate crimes.

The lessons of history are used to create a call to action, teaching visitors through the examples of those who risked their lives to save others, and asking our guests to react to contemporary challenges such as racism and prejudice. Exhibits include artifacts such as an authentic WWII-era boxcar, video testimonies, films, paintings, and a sapling from the tree located outside Anne Frank's hiding place window that is described in her diary. Located on the second floor above the museum, the Library Archive is an important resource for academics, the media and families researching their heritage. A national leader in innovative genocide education, the HMC serves over 100,000 Michiganders each year.

Hours: Sunday through Thursday 9:30 am to 5:00 pm and Friday 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. The last admission is one hour before closing. Wheelchair accessible. Free parking. For additional information, visit www.holocaustcenter.org or call 248-553-2400.

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