

Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship



Introducing Mina Cohn, Director of The Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship

As a child of Holocaust survivors growing up in Israel, the last thing I sought to do was be involved with Holocaust education and programming. I was interested in archaeology and was anticipating a professional adult life focused on research in that area. However, after moving to Canada and having a family of my own, Holocaust remembrance slowly became an area of interest and importance. Joining the Ottawa Shoah Committee was a natural step. I have been involved with The Ottawa Shoah Committee since the late 80's and for five and a half years served as the committee's chair. I believe that in the face of today's challenges it is essential that we ensure that the Holocaust is never forgotten and that the

teaching of its legacy continues.

In early 2015, we started to seriously explore ways to establish a Centre for Holocaust Education in Ottawa. Recognizing that Ottawa was the only major city in Canada not to have such a Centre compelled me to work towards the realization of this goal. Following some research, a Founding Committee including survivors, children of survivors and educators was established. Shortly thereafter, we approached Deidre Butler, Director of the Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies, to discuss the creation of a Centre for Holocaust Education.

The Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES) at Carleton University's Zelikovitz Centre was launched

on November 8, in the presence of the Roseann O'Reilly Runte, President and Vice-Chancellor of Carleton University, His Excellency, Rafael Barak, Ambassador of Israel, His Excellency, Werner Franz Wnendt, Ambassador of Germany, His Excellency, Balint Odor, Ambassador of Hungary, His Excellency, Selçuk Ünal, Ambassador of Turkey, as well as dignitaries and representatives from other embassies.

Our launch event included the screening of the documentary *Shores of Light* and a short and poignant presentation by Cypora Leb, one of the babies born in Santa Maria di Leuca, who joined us from Montreal. Both the documentary and Mrs. Leb's words were warmly received

Future Plans:

CHES has arrived at an understanding with the Ottawa Jewish Federation and together we will develop Holocaust educational programs year-round, with a special focus on programming for Holocaust Education Month. Planning for November 2016 is already underway. The Committee is considering the theme "Holocaust and the Law"

with various programs related to this subject. More information will be available in the following months.

CHES is also working with Carleton University's MacOdrum Library to create a "Subject Guide" list of topics for Holocaust Education, which will be a valuable resource for scholars and teachers.

Join the CHES:

The CHES committee welcomes new members. Children of survivors are especially welcome to join. For more information, please contact:

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and left the audience very moved.

One of the goals of CHES is to ensure the continuity of Holocaust education through the active involvement of Holocaust survivors and their descendants. On December 9, we had our first very successful educational project in the form of a "Human Library" at a local high school with three survivors and three children of survivors. We anticipate working closely with the Ottawa school boards in the years ahead.

"CHES is privileged to have a dedicated committee whose members have considerable experience in developing and presenting Holocaust education programs with in-depth learning and commemoration opportunities for young and old throughout the year."

CHES is privileged to have a dedicated committee whose members have considerable experience in developing and presenting Holocaust education programs with in-depth learning and commemoration opportunities for young and old throughout the year. The committee is currently planning programs for 2016. To be able to offer these programs and fulfill our mission and goals, CHES depends on donations and is also applying for grants. The Centre's major goal is to reach out to the public at large, promote respect for diversity and human rights, and sensitize the general public to the universal perils of anti-Semitism, racism, indifference, and hate.

I invite you to support our events in the future and look forward to seeing you as participants in our projects.

Mina Cohn



Mrs. Mina Cohn, Chairperson of CHES and Dr. Deidre Butler, Director of the Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies at Carleton University, signing the documentation inaugurating their partnership

Documentary *Shores of Light* Shines at Inaugural Ceremony

By Marion Silver, Secretary of the CHES Committee

The inauguration of the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES) was celebrated by a capacity crowd on Sunday, November 8, 2015. The first part of the evening was highlighted by the opening ceremony wherein Mina Cohn, Director of CHES, and Deidre Butler, Director of the Zelikovitz Centre, signed the rational document that describes their partnership. This formal procedure was followed by the screening of the documentary, *Shores of Light*, a film which details a hitherto untold chapter in the history of the Holocaust. It relates the story of displaced survivors who, having suffered through

the hardships and horrors of the Nazi concentration camps, were denied entry to permanent homes in what was then British Palestine. These survivors miraculously found sanctuary and warm hospitality in the Italian village of Santa Maria de Leuca.

The film was the brainchild of four Israeli women who chose to document the personal histories of their parents. In the making of the film, they uncovered the story of the wonderful relationship that existed between the poor local villagers and their survivor parents. Here, in Santa Maria de Leuca, survivors who had lost most of their loved ones were

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Photo: Ulle Baum



Left-right: front row: His Excellency, Pawel Wolowski, Ambassador of Poland, His Excellency, Fabrizio Nova, Ambassador of Italy, Mrs. Mina Cohn, director of CHES, His Excellency, Werner Wnendt, Ambassador of Germany, His Excellency, Balint Odor, Ambassador of Hungary. Second row: His Excellency, Rafael Barak, Ambassador of Israel and Mrs. Miriam Wnendt-Juber

able to begin their lives anew. They got married and had children. In all, 200 Jewish babies were born in Santa Maria de Leuca between 1945 and 1948.

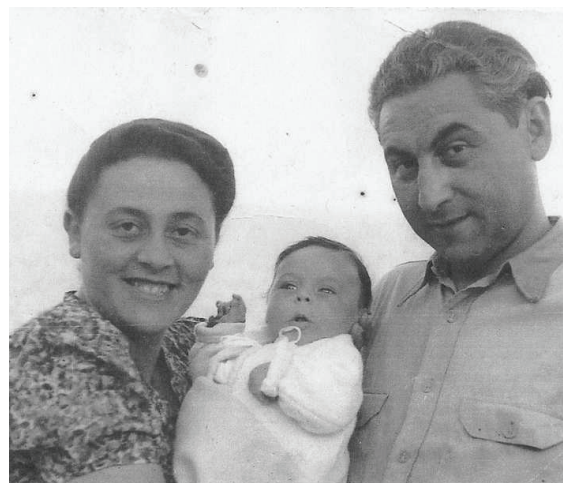
One such baby, Cypora Leb, née Altman of Montreal, was a distinguished guest at the event. In a moving address to the audience, Mrs. Leb remarked “my family and I are immensely grateful for choosing to honour the memory of our parents, Miriam and Moshe Altman, by paying everlasting tribute to them, to the six million Jews who perished, to the survivors, and to the righteous Italians who helped them rebuild their shattered lives.”

The audience, which consisted of a wide range of community members, was very enthusiastic about the initiative undertaken that evening. Benita Siemiatycki, former coordinator of the Jewish Ottawa InfoCentre, illustrates her commendation with the following comments: “I had the pleasure of attending the Centre’s inauguration...the movie was excellent and hearing first-hand from Mrs. Leb was another lesson in living history. The Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship will play a positive and important role in educating the Ottawa community.” Mrs. Miriam Barak, wife of Israeli Ambassador Rafael Barak, and Rabbi Howard Finkelstein of Congregation Beth Tikvah both agreed that it was “an emotional and memorable evening.” This event was made possible thanks to the support of the Zelikovitz Centre for Jewish Studies and Carleton University.

Photo: Ulle Baum



Left-right: front row: Mrs. Mina Cohn, Mrs. Cypora Leb, His Excellency, Fabrizio Nova, Ambassador of Italy, and Mrs. Ida Singer. Second row: His Excellency, Rafael Barak, Ambassador of Israel



Holocaust survivors, Miriam Cukierman and Moshe Altman, with their baby, Cypora.

“Human Library” Arrives at Cairine Wilson Secondary School

On Wednesday, December 9, 2015, a limousine shuttled Holocaust survivors as well as children of Holocaust survivors to eagerly awaiting students of History and World Religions at Cairine Wilson Secondary School in Orleans. There, Mina Cohn, Director of the Centre for Holocaust Education and Scholarship (CHES), Vera Gara, Ellie Bollegraaf, Tibor Egervari, Rubin Friedman and Marion Silver, were greeted warmly by the students and their teacher, Elaine Bryans. They were ushered into the library, which was beautifully decorated for the festival of Chanukah and Chanukah candles were lit. The tables were laden with blue and white place settings and each visitor was assigned a student server. The guests were then treated to a lunch painstakingly researched and meticulously prepared by the students in order to observe the rules of kashruth. During the lunch period, small groups of students were seated with each speaker who described either their own or their parents' experience during the Holocaust, as well as aspects of Judaism that were of interest to them. After lunch, two other World History classes along with their teacher, Kerra Wadley, joined the survivors and the children of survivors. The students were keen listeners, came prepared with questions, and were enthusiastic participants in the discussions that ensued. They demonstrated the utmost respect for the subject and were a credit to their school. Before leaving the school,



Two students from Cairine Wilson Secondary School holding up welcome signs.

as a token of appreciation, each visitor was handed a bouquet of flowers. It is indeed gratifying to know that there are teachers who are striving to help young people appreciate the events of history and who are guiding them in finding their place in today's very challenging world. The visit to Cairine Wilson Secondary School was the first of many that CHES plans to conduct in co-operation with local school boards in the Ottawa area.

As part of its mandate, CHES will continue to coordinate visits to schools in the Ottawa-Carleton area. We are in the process of informing schools about the steps they can take to invite a local survivor to speak to their students.

Ari van Mansum Award:

The Ari van Mansum Award is presented to a deserving teacher for excellence in Holocaust Education. This award is granted to the recipient during Holocaust Education Month each year. CHES is accepting nominees for this inspiring award. For more information about placing a nomination, please contact: minacohn@rogers.com



Child of Holocaust survivors, Rubin Friedman, lights Chanukah candles at Cairine Wilson Secondary School with Tibor Egevari, Marion Silver and Elly Bollograaf.