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## **Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust** *A Powerful Cultural Attraction in Lower Manhattan Presents* *A Century of Remembrance, Hope, Life, and Legacy*

New York, NY – Since opening its doors in September 1997, the Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust in Battery Park City has welcomed more than 1.5 million visitors from around the world. The Museum’s Core Exhibition is at the center of the visitor experience, focusing on the Holocaust and Jewish life that both preceded it and followed it. Special exhibitions, public programming, and contemplative spaces enrich the visitor experience.

“The high level of intense interest by Jews and non-Jews alike tells us our powerful and eloquent exhibitions say something important about the human experience,” said Museum Chairman Emeritus Robert M. Morgenthau. “The exhibitions document the tragedy of human loss and the vitality of renewal that the Jewish people have experienced in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries.”

Bruce Ratner, Chairman of the Board and Executive Chairman of FCRC, said, “I take great pride in the Museum of Jewish Heritage’s mission of educating visitors of diverse backgrounds and ages about how Jews lived and thrived a century ago, how they survived the Holocaust, and how they went on to rebuild their communities after the war. While there are fewer survivors left, the issues of the Holocaust and genocide are more important today than a decade ago. In this new century, as we move further and further away from the Holocaust, we need to understand what happened to the Jewish people in order to prevent acts of genocide from being perpetrated across the globe today.”

### **The Mission**

Created as a living memorial to those who perished in the Holocaust, the Museum honors those who died by celebrating their lives – cherishing the traditions that they embraced, examining their achievements and faith, and affirming the vibrant worldwide Jewish community that is their legacy today.

The two Biblical quotes that define the Museum’s mission – “*Remember, Never Forget*” and “*There Is Hope For Your Future*” – also define the Museum’s perspective on the events of the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century Jewish experience. Although the Museum centers on life before, during, and after the Holocaust, the obligation to remember is enriched and enhanced by a commitment to the principles of social justice, education, and culture in the Jewish community and beyond.

“Visitors to the Museum come to understand something about the legacy and spirit of the Jewish people,” says Museum Director Dr. David G. Marwell. “The first-person narrative allows visitors to identify with our exhibitions’ themes and reinforces the Museum’s universal message of memory and hope.”

### **The Museum**

Located on the waterfront at 36 Battery Place in Manhattan’s Battery Park City, the Museum occupies a 112,000-square-foot structure designed by Pritzker Prize-winning architect Kevin Roche. The unique architecture of the

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original building (completed in 1997) with its six-sided shape and tiered roof, evokes the six points of the Star of David and is symbolic of the strength of the Jewish people and of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust. The Robert M. Morgenthau Wing broke ground in November 2001, and opened in 2003.

### **Core Exhibition**

Drawing from a collection of nearly 25,000 artifacts, photographs, testimonies, documents, and historic films, which have been gathered over two decades, the exhibition opens new doors of understanding for people of all backgrounds about both the devastation wrought by ethnic and cultural intolerance and the power of hope.

Throughout the exhibition's three floors, organized around the themes of *Jewish Life a Century Ago*, *The War Against the Jews*, and *Jewish Renewal*, the voices of Jewish people from all walks of life reverberate, telling their stories of survival and hope. Documentary films cover the full span of modern Jewish history, including testimonies from Museum Trustee Steven Spielberg's Survivors of the Shoah Visual History Foundation, and uplifting tributes to Jews who have made their marks in the worlds of entertainment, culture, and politics.

Many visitors choose to take the Museum's award-winning audio tour narrated by Meryl Streep and Itzhak Perlman, which is available in English, Spanish, Russian, and Japanese. Groups can arrange tours in advance with a Gallery Educator, many of whom are Holocaust survivors who volunteer their time and share their experiences, memories, and wisdom.

### **Special Exhibitions**

The Museum's special exhibitions provide an opportunity to complement the themes of the Core Exhibition. They examine the multifaceted experiences of Jews in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. Over the years, special exhibitions at the Museum have included: *New York – City of Refuge: Stories from the Last 60 Years* about Jewish immigration to New York City following the Holocaust; *Yahrzeit*, commemorating the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks; and *Kippur: Three Weeks in October*, a photographic exhibition of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

Current special exhibitions include *A Town Known as Auschwitz: The Life and Death of a Jewish Community*. *Designing Home: Jews and Midcentury Modernism* opens March 31, 2015

The *Keeping History Center*, an on-going exhibition, presents the Museum's ideas and collections in a state-of-the-art, interactive, digital visitor experience. The Center occupies a 2,200-square-foot area that has panoramic views of New York Harbor and the Statue of Liberty. Perhaps more than any other space in the building, the Keeping History Center is the link between the Museum's subject matter and its powerful symbolic neighbors. The Center features *Voices of Liberty*, a soundscape of diverse voices responding to arriving in America for the first time, including Holocaust survivors, Soviet refuseniks, and others. The Center also contains a virtual exploration of Andy Goldsworthy's *Garden of Stones* called "Timekeeper." In 2012, the Keeping History Center became the only public space in New York where visitors are able to search 2,500 testimonies from the USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education.

### **Contemplative Spaces**

Andy Goldsworthy's *Garden of Stones* is a contemplative space dedicated to the memory of those who perished in the Holocaust and honors those who survived. For the *Garden of Stones*, Goldsworthy's only permanent installation in New York City, he worked with nature's most elemental materials – stone, trees, and soil – to create a metaphor for the tenacity and fragility of life. Eighteen boulders form a series of narrow pathways in the memorial garden's 4,150-square-foot space. A single dwarf oak sapling emerges from each boulder. As the trees mature in the coming years, each will grow to become a part of the stone, its trunk widening and fusing to the base.

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MacArthur Award winner James Carpenter's *Reflection Passage*, (Gift of The EGL Charitable Foundation), creates a transitional space between the Core Exhibition and the Morgenthau Wing. Through the perception of light, *Reflection Passage* instills in visitors a heightened awareness of the present – which is at the essence of the institution's mission as a history museum.

### **For Students and Teachers**

As an educational institution, the Museum is committed to serving students and instructors from a broad spectrum of schools. The Museum offers guided class visits led by trained Gallery Educators, pre- and post-visit curriculum materials, classroom speakers, and educator training workshops – all designed to integrate the Museum visit into the process of classroom learning. The Museum also offers high school, undergraduate, and graduate level internships to students interested in broadening their knowledge of 20th century Jewish heritage, the Holocaust, and how the lessons of history apply to contemporary society.

### **Public Programming**

In the 375-seat, state-of-the-art Edmond J. Safra Hall, the Museum offers a full schedule of public programs that are both consistent with its mission and push the envelope. The Museum hosts films, concerts, and panel discussions throughout the year. Past programs have included symposia on the Holocaust, interfaith dialogues, and concerts featuring established and emerging artists.

Over the last few years, the Museum has held a day-long symposium on Darfur with policy makers and leaders on human rights, presented a night of New York's Best Emerging Jewish Artists, and explored Justice after the Holocaust with experts like Alan Dershowitz. The Museum has also presented important film programs, featuring both new and vintage films with related programming, including Claude Lanzmann's *Shoah* with a rare appearance by the director.

### **Visitor Amenities**

The Museum's Resource Center, which serves educators and visitors from around the world, maintains a collection of curriculum material and information to aid teachers with Holocaust education. The Resource Center also houses the Benjamin and Vladka Meed Registry of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, a national database used to document the lives of survivors who came to the United States and other countries after World War II. (It is maintained by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.)

The Gladys and Morton Pickman Museum Shop offers a wide variety of Judaica, jewelry, books and music, and toys for children, including gifts related to the Museum's educational mission. The Heritage Café, operated by Foremost Caterers, is a kosher café with moderately priced lunch options, including gourmet salads, sandwiches, and soups. The café offers sweeping views of the Stature of Liberty, Ellis Island and Andy Goldsworthy's *Garden of Stones*.

### **JewishGen**

JewishGen, [www.jewishgen.org](http://www.jewishgen.org), became an affiliate of the Museum on January 1, 2003. An Internet pioneer, JewishGen was founded in 1987 and has grown from a bulletin board with only 150 users to a major grass roots effort bringing together hundreds of thousands of individuals worldwide in a virtual community centered on discovering Jewish ancestral roots and history.

Researchers use JewishGen to share genealogical information, techniques, and case studies. With a growing database of more than 11 million records, the website is a forum for the exchange of information about Jewish life

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and family history, and has enabled thousands of families to connect and re-connect in a way never before possible.

### **Auschwitz Jewish Center**

In addition to the New York campus, the Museum also operates the Auschwitz Jewish Center in Oswiecim, Poland. The Center opened its doors in 2000 and joined with the Museum in 2006. The only Jewish presence in the vicinity of Auschwitz, its facilities include Oswiecim's only surviving synagogue. Located just three kilometers from the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camps, the Center provides a place for individuals and groups from around the world to pray, study, learn about the vibrancy of Jewish culture before the war, and memorialize victims of the Holocaust. The Center's exhibition includes photographs, texts, and objects, which depict the multifaceted Jewish culture that existed in Oswiecim until the Nazis occupied the community in 1939.

The Center provides regularly scheduled exhibitions and educational programs. The American Service Academies Program takes students from the military academies for a three-week trip to Poland to learn from survivors, scholars, and historians. The Auschwitz Jewish Center Fellows: A Bridge to History Program brings together eight to twelve graduate students for an immersive program in Poland, preceded by orientation in New York City.

*The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs, and is a founding member of the Museums of Lower Manhattan. Both the State of New York and the City of New York have provided support for the establishment and maintenance of the Museum, which is one of the City's 34 prestigious Cultural Institutions Group (CIG).*

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