



**MUSEUM OF
JEWISH HERITAGE**
A LIVING MEMORIAL
TO THE HOLOCAUST



**Battery Park
City Authority**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust and Battery Park City Authority Dedicate “The Children’s Tree,” a Maple Descended from a Tree Planted by Children at Theresienstadt Concentration Camp

—Museum of Jewish Heritage hosts a special dedication ceremony for the newly-planted Children’s Tree on Thursday, December 2, 2021; [Watch the ceremony here](#)—

(New York, NY) — On Thursday, December 2, 2021, the **Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust** and **Battery Park City Authority** held a special ceremony to dedicate [“The Children’s Tree”](#), the descendant of one planted by Jewish children inside the Theresienstadt (Terezín) concentration camp.

The tree, a silver maple, was just relocated from a historic property in New Hope, PA, and planted near the front entrance of the Museum. You can learn more about the tree and watch the dedication ceremony [here](#) or at <https://mjhny.org/blog/dedication-of-the-childrens-tree-a-living-artifact-from-theresienstadt/>.

“With roots born of the Holocaust, the tree—now firmly planted in the ground outside our museum—has branches that point us towards a brighter future,” said Museum President and CEO **Jack Kliger**. “We are calling this silver maple “the Children’s Tree” because of you, the children of today and tomorrow. By learning about the children who planted and nurtured the original Tree of Life 80 years ago, you are becoming witnesses to the story of the Holocaust and caretakers of a piece of history in your own backyard.”

The dedication ceremony began with a program featuring remarks from a number of dignitaries, including Ambassador **Linda Thomas-Greenfield**, the U.S. Representative to the United Nations, and Czech Consul General **Arnošt Kareš**.

“We are all moved by different exhibits, different ways of telling the stories of the Holocaust. For me, personally, the story of this tree is one of the most powerful I have ever come across,” Ambassador **Linda Thomas-Greenfield** said.

Said Battery Park City Authority President & CEO **B.J. Jones**: “We are honored to have planted The Children’s Tree here in Battery Park City and are humbled by our responsibility to care for it for generations to come. The tree serves as an important symbol of our efforts, in partnership with the Museum of Jewish Heritage, to fight intolerance and foster inclusivity both locally and globally.”

The event included remarks from Consul General of the Czech Republic **Arnošt Kareš**; **Mara Sonnenschein**, the great-granddaughter of Dorette Roos, who died at Theresienstadt; and, **Paul Radensky**, Senior Director for Education at the Museum of Jewish Heritage; and, a performance from the student choir at PS/IS 276: The Battery Park City School, located across the street from the Museum.

Several Holocaust survivors, including Theresienstadt survivor **Fred Terna**, attended as well. Said Terna, “My feeling of the tree is one word: memory. This an occasion of remembering. This planting is a form of remembering and that’s what this tree is: continuity. That’s what the Museum does.”

After an indoor program, attendees moved outside to dedicate the tree, which stands near the front entrance to the Museum. Mr. Terna and Ms. Sonnenschein were among those who watered the tree, joined by a number of current and future members of the New York City Council.

The tree’s remarkable history is a moving tribute to spiritual resilience and hope. The Nazis allowed children at Theresienstadt (in what was then known as Czechoslovakia) to be educated as part of a promotional ploy to hide the camp’s genocidal purpose. In January 1943, a teacher named **Irma Lauscher** bribed a Czech camp guard to smuggle a tree sapling into the camp. She wanted to plant the young tree in a secret ceremony to celebrate the holiday of TuB’Shevat (the Jewish new year for trees). Together with a group of Jewish children imprisoned in the camp, Lauscher planted the sapling. The group used their water rations to nurture it.

“The children at Theresienstadt cared for the tree every day, knowing that it would endure and live a life that they would not. This was an act of spiritual resistance of the highest magnitude,” said **Michael Berenbaum**, world-renowned historian and Director of the Sigi Ziering Institute at American Jewish University. “There is a story in the Talmud about an old man planting a tree. A man approaches him and says, ‘You fool, why are you planting a tree when you are not going to see its leaves?’ The old man responds that, ‘My grandfather planted a tree and I enjoyed its fruits. My grandchildren and future generations will enjoy its fruits.’”

Most of the children who planted the tree were deported to Auschwitz, the largest extermination camp in Poland, and died there. Of the more than 15,000 Jewish children who were imprisoned in Theresienstadt during the Holocaust, fewer than 200 survived.

After liberation, survivors placed a sign at the base of the tree, proclaiming, “As the branches of this tree, so the branches of our people!” Although the tree was later destroyed in a flood, saplings had been cut from it and planted in Jerusalem, San Francisco, Chicago, Philadelphia, **but not here in New York City**, home to the largest community of Holocaust survivors and their descendants of any city outside Israel.

A Jewish philanthropist recently purchased a historic farm in Pennsylvania where seven trees grown from cuttings of the original tree are thriving, and agreed to donate one to the Museum. That 15-foot tree recently was transported to Battery Park and replanted – and will be cared for by students at PS/IS 276 for generations to come.

About The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust

The Museum of Jewish Heritage – A Living Memorial to the Holocaust is New York’s contribution to the global responsibility to never forget. The Museum is committed to the crucial mission of educating diverse visitors about Jewish life before, during, and after the Holocaust. The third largest Holocaust museum in the world and the second largest in North America, the Museum of Jewish Heritage anchors the southernmost tip of Manhattan, completing the cultural and educational landscape it shares with the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island.

The Museum of Jewish Heritage maintains a collection of almost 40,000 artifacts, photographs, documentary films, and survivor testimonies and contains classrooms, a 375-seat theater (Edmond J. Safra Hall), special exhibition galleries, a resource center for educators, and a memorial art installation, *Garden of Stones*, designed by internationally acclaimed sculptor Andy Goldsworthy. The Museum is the home of National Yiddish Theatre Folksbiene.

The Museum’s current offerings include [Boris Lurie: Nothing To Do But To Try](#), a first of its kind exhibition on the 20th century artist and Holocaust survivor on view through April 29, 2022, and [Tovah Feldshuh in Becoming Dr. Ruth](#), a limited engagement through January 2, 2022.

The Museum receives general operating support from the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and New York State Council on the Arts.

For more information, visit mjhnyc.org.

About BPCA: Established in 1968, The Hugh L. Carey Battery Park City Authority is a New York State Public Benefit Corporation charged with developing and maintaining a well-balanced, 92-acre community of commercial, residential, retail and open space, including 36 acres of public parks, on Manhattan’s Lower West Side. Through execution of its first-ever strategic plan, BPCA works daily toward being an inclusive community, a safe and climate resilient place, a vibrant public space, and demonstrating leadership for the future with a team dedicated to improving service and project delivery. For more info visit: bpca.ny.gov

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