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EYES FROM THE ASHES EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION

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Dear Friends,

No one even knew that the precious photos Jews carried to Auschwitz in 1943 existed. The Nazis destroyed all confiscated letters and photos—except for this one group that had been secretly hidden by the Jewish underground. Accidentally—miraculously—I found these photos 43 years later in Auschwitz, and ultimately was able to share them at an international conference in Jerusalem. Afterward, an old man hobbled forward, pointing to a wedding photo (see right) and proclaimed, “I danced at this wedding!”



That was the beginning.

With his words, I understood what was possible. I had seen these photos as archetypes of who and what we lost - never imagining that these photos could ever be identified. Thus began this quest to find people who belonged to the photos, learn their stories, give them copies, and share their stories world-wide.

The power of these photos—the message they carry of the dangers of hate and silence—has never been more vital.

Of the hundreds of survivors I have interviewed, only a handful are left. Recently we lost Elie Wiesel, arguably the world’s best known survivor, who also became, in many ways, the conscience of the world. And we lost Yaffa Eliach, author of Hasidic Tales of the Holocaust, whose Eisheshek shtetl photos line the tower at

the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, and for many visitors, her display is the most moving part of the museum.

Both were important to the world; and both were important to me as well.

When Elie saw the photos that evolved into my exhibit and eventually into my book, titled The Last Album: Eyes from the Ashes of Auschwitz-Birkenau, he wrote the epigraph:

“Let us tell talesThe last word belongs to the victim.
Let us tell tales—that is our primary obligation.”

Eyes from the Ashes (EFTA) serves as a shofar, a megaphone of sorts, as Elie Wiesel exhorted, for the tales of who these people were as individuals—by focussing on the values and lives they lived, rather than solely on the way they died. It is their voices that are heard throughout this important work.



Yaffa honored our work when, upon seeing ‘The Last Album’ photo exhibit, said: “Your vision is the same as mine. The photos in your exhibit show how much we all have in common.”



Through our teaching, exhibits and presentations, these photos compellingly demonstrate how much more we all have in common as individuals than that which divides us. They inspire us NEVER to be a bystander to injustice.

[Note this is the same wedding couple, seen two years later]

Now, at this moment, when tolerance and education are at risk, and are more necessary than ever, it’s essential for these photos, and the lessons they teach, to be seen, absorbed and understood.

Toward that end, we are:

- Engaging deeper into grassroots efforts—speaking at schools, community/civic groups, universities as well as religious institutions.
- Helping to educate future generations—to increase awareness of the dangers of silence and deepen commitment to action and tolerance.
- Training and mentoring young scholars to continue and broaden the work.
- Transmitting our research and findings to other scholars, educators and communal leaders, in order to sustain memory and perpetuate a link to the survivors' history, lives and experiences.



Even as more and more survivors die, the impact of these photos and the stories they convey, remains vitally present. A photo not only evokes memory, it evokes an imaginative presence.



[For descriptions of photos on these pages, please see: www.thelastalbum.org]

The teachings, the research, the meaning we derive from this body of work evoke deeper understanding, helps promote tolerance, and encourages ethical action.

It is extraordinary that these photos of people murdered by hate so long ago still have the power to teach us, and future generations, not to hate, to be vigilant and to care.

Please help us continue to do this vital work of remembering, honoring and teaching—and through these photos, and their stories, allowing the lives of these ‘Eyes from the Ashes’ to inspire us to live better, to do better and to help each other even more.

With blessings for you, your loved ones, and our fractured world,



Ann Weiss, Ph.D.

Founder and Director, Eyes from the Ashes Educational Foundation

PS Please give generously. Time is truly running out.

Being a small 503(c)3 educational foundation, our work is efficiently streamlined. We are proud to say that all donations directly go to support programs, research and teaching initiative. Thank you so much.



