



The Survivor Mitzvah Project
HOLOCAUST EDUCATIONAL ARCHIVE
THE HOLOCAUST IN THE EAST

The Survivor Mitzvah Project's Holocaust Educational Archive illuminates the Holocaust in the East, a lesser known chapter of the Holocaust that demands greater study.

The Survivor Mitzvah Project's Holocaust Educational Archive Collections are unique and important repositories of videography, photographs, letters, primary source documents, Holocaust testimonies and additional materials documenting the Holocaust in Eastern Europe with never before recorded materials in all media.

The archive preserves the vanishing history of a precious generation, and brings this history alive in an exciting, contemporary way to teach the Holocaust to current and future generations. The archive includes content from 9 countries: Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Slovakia, Transnistria, Ukraine and Russia.

Vivid testimony from survivors both written and filmed chronicles their experiences: those who escaped the *Einsatzgruppen*, who fled to Central Asia during the bombardments, who went into hiding to escape the mass killings, who were lined up to be killed in mass graves but survived, who were trapped in ghettos and imprisoned in little known concentration camps, and those who fought as Partisans in the forests. Video testimony also includes those who witnessed these events.

Amassed from 2001 to the present, this first-person testimony documents the full human presence and experience of survivors/witnesses in a unique and comprehensive way, including not only their faces and their voices, but their individual personalities, creating an extensive picture of their life experiences from pre-war times, throughout the Holocaust, and in post-war Eastern Europe.

Archival materials: Over 500 hours of video and over 12,000 documents:

- Holocaust testimonies and interviews with survivors, rescuers, and eye-witnesses.
- Survivors in their dwellings and current surroundings: their huts, their villages, the wells where they still draw water, the root cellars storing a meagre food supply, and the last, vanishing remnants of Jewish life and traditions.
- The forests where they hid and the Partisan bunkers where they bravely fought as teenagers, including survivors re-visiting these bunkers as they recall life in the forest.
- Synagogue ruins from decimated communities dating back to the 1600s. The archive contains the only existing film of synagogues which are no longer standing or are rapidly deteriorating, including the last wooden synagogues in Lithuania and Latvia.
- The sites of mass killings across Eastern Europe.
- The numerous abandoned and undocumented graveyards in outlying village regions where their [and our] ancestors rest – some dating back to before the time of Napoleon.

The archive also contains the survivors' reflections in old age on having experienced not only the darkest days of the 20th Century, the Holocaust, but the cruel vicissitudes of Soviet and now post-Soviet life, and the unique philosophical and sociological attitudes, wisdom and perspective Holocaust survivors continue to impart to *The Survivor Mitzvah Project*.

Their testimony is their legacy, a gift from survivors to all of us revealing not only their Holocaust experiences and shtetl life, but their hopes for a brighter future of peace, understanding, tolerance and acceptance.

For the survivors of the Holocaust, having their stories told after 80 years of silence is both fulfilling and cathartic. As the history and vestiges of Jewish life in Eastern Europe are being rapidly erased, it is especially important for a project of this nature to be realized now. The advanced age of the survivors and witnesses, most in their 80's and 90s, adds urgency to the immediate continuation of our work: to capture their testimony and life histories on video as soon as possible. This archive is the only existing record of hundreds of survivors of the Holocaust.

Expanding, curating and preserving *The Survivor Mitzvah Project's Holocaust Educational Archive* will have a significant impact on Holocaust education now and far into the future:

- As an important permanent museum collection/exhibition and series of special exhibitions.
- As a mobile app and online resource in sync with the digital age.
- As an important addition to educational curricula and research, accessible to students, scholars, educators, and the general public worldwide.
- *The Survivor Mitzvah* Project collections will be available both in museums and digitally, focusing on historical events of the Holocaust and their impact on individuals, from past to the present, including their unusual circumstances as they live out their final years in the same towns and villages where the Holocaust happened.
- In Eastern Europe, there is an increasing hostile environment of neo-Nazi activity and growing anti-Semitism to which Holocaust survivors are currently subjected. The officially sanctioned redaction and distortion of historical fact disseminated in Soviet era education has resulted in widespread anti-Semitism, and a general ignorance of Jewish history in their homelands.
- *SMP's* archival materials allow new generations here and abroad to discover new dimensions of their Jewish traditions, identity and history that have been mostly hidden and unspoken for decades, and is a valuable resource for educating local communities about hidden aspects of their nations' pasts. Generations of non-Jews in Eastern Europe and the Baltics grew up with little or no truthful knowledge of Jewish heritage or contributions to culture and society in their homelands. The archive's powerful personal statements and compelling videography helps bridge past and present, playing a vital role in opening a dialogue between generations and between Jews and non-Jews, creating a better understanding of Jewish life in the wider society.

Rich in history and Holocaust testimony, *The Survivor Mitzvah Project's Holocaust Educational Archive* contributes to a meaningful modern day dialogue on justice, tolerance for cultural differences, and an appreciation of human commonality, while standing as an important reminder to confront evil wherever it takes hold.

Click to view Holocaust Educational Archive Video: <https://youtu.be/x-6vVpM6mmE>

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