

Holocaust survivors compelled to tell their stories before it's too late

On Sunday 27 January, the world commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day and the 74th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz. The global campaign surrounding this day pledges **#WeRemember**, so that the memory and lessons of the Holocaust are never forgotten. Nearly 75 years since the end of World War II, the Holocaust survivor generation is dwindling, and intolerance and bigotry continue to occur. Yet there are still survivors who have not spoken about their wartime experiences.

More than 10 Holocaust survivors, who until recently had not talked publicly about their experiences of the Holocaust, have come forward in the last couple of years to share their testimonies with the Sydney Jewish Museum and speak to visiting student groups.

The Museum's Head of Education, Dr Rebecca Kummerfeld, explains that "Auschwitz was liberated 74 years ago, and yet many survivors are still overcome with the pain, they remain unable to speak. For those few who now feel ready to share their stories, it is still a painful process. But they are motivated by a sense responsibility to the memorialise victims of the holocaust and by the need to tell their story while they are still able."

Bosnian-born Holocaust survivor, Aviva Fox, had not spoken about her experiences of the Holocaust until a couple of years ago. After an incredible revelation from the family who saved her life, Fox felt confident that her story was actually worth telling and approached the Sydney Jewish Museum. Fox admitted that although only starting to talk later in life, she strongly believes "it is our duty to open up and talk about it."

The process of telling one's story for the first time is difficult, and the trained team at the Museum act as supports to new survivors throughout their journey. "When a survivor approaches the Museum, we invite them to share their story with us on their own terms. Sometimes, after years of holding memories to themselves, survivors will offer up a continuous narrative as memories flood to the surface. Over a period of weeks or months, we work with survivors to prepare them for the experience of speaking in front of an audience, regularly checking in to see how they are and trying to ensure they feel emotionally supported through the process." – Dr Rebecca Kummerfeld.

The Sydney Jewish Museum is hoping to reach survivors of the Holocaust who have not shared their stories to record their testimony for posterity or speak to student groups at the Museum. Contact the Museum on 9360 7999, or email volunteer@sjm.com.au