

National Days of Remembrance

GUIDELINES FOR HOSTING A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

Finding and Booking a Holocaust Survivor Speaker

Through the Division of Survivor Affairs, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Please e-mail speakersbureau@ushmm.org to request the Museum to arrange for survivors to speak at venues across the country and abroad. All associated costs are the responsibility of the requesting organization. The Museum will make every effort to accommodate the requests we receive.

Through an organization in your community

Please consult the Association of Holocaust Organizations at www.ahoinfo.org to determine if a local organization can help arrange survivor speakers. You will need to consult directly with these local organizations about any associated costs.

Providing Information to the Speaker

When requesting a survivor to speak at your Days of Remembrance observance, you will need to provide the following information:

- Name of organization
- Date, time, and purpose of program
- Audience profile (age, size, topics of interest, any preparation or relevant activities taking place before the event, etc.)
- Location of program, address
- Name, phone number, and e-mail address of program coordinator

If you are working with the Museum, we will communicate directly with the survivor and provide all relevant information. If you are working with another organization or are in direct communication with a survivor, please send a confirmation letter in advance of your program, reiterating clearly the information listed above and encouraging the survivor to contact the program coordinator with any questions.

Choosing a Program Format

Please discuss your program format with the survivor in advance to ensure his or her comfort.

Stand-alone Lecture

This is the most common format, with the survivor speaking about his or her Holocaust experiences for 40–45 minutes followed by a 15–20 minute question-and-answer period with the audience.

Interview

An interviewer asks questions of a survivor. There are experienced interviewers in most communities who could serve as moderators, including local radio and television personalities as well as oral history experts from museums and universities. Sample questions for interviewing a Holocaust survivor can be found on this disc.

Panel Discussion or Program Series

Provide an opportunity for multiple voices on the history—for example, from a survivor, a liberator, or a historian. Include an opportunity for informal discussion between the survivor and other speakers and the audience during your program. Please note that a survivor often requires at least 30 minutes to tell his or her experiences, so take this into consideration when planning the number of participants.

Book Reading and Signing

You may also want to consider featuring a book reading and signing in your program if the survivor has published memoirs.

Providing Historical Context

Introduce the history of the Holocaust to program attendees in advance to provide context for the survivor's personal narrative. Resources to help you do this can be found on this disc (Historical Overview Articles and animated maps of World War II and the Holocaust) as well as on the Museum's Web site: www.ushmm.org. Please remember that every survivor's experience is unique, and you may wish to take each person's history into consideration when you are providing a broader context.

Showing Sensitivity in Dealing with a Difficult Topic

Please remember that the survivor is sharing private and often traumatic memories in a public setting; many find they are able to share their history only once in a day. Your sensitivity to this is critical to planning a successful program.

Planning for the Survivor's Visit

- If your program requires the survivor to travel, you will be expected to bear all costs associated with the trip.
- Please arrange for the survivor to stay overnight if the trip involves air travel or a car ride of more than two hours each way.
- In many instances, the survivor will be accompanied by a travel companion. You will be expected to bear all costs associated with the companion's travel.
- Please arrange for all transportation throughout the trip, including travel to and from the airport, to the hotel, to the program, to meals, and for other occasions that may arise.
- Identify a local "point person"—someone affiliated with your organization who will address the needs of the survivor during his or her stay.
- Be aware of the survivor's dietary needs, including allergies, kosher food, and other special requests, as well as the timing of meals—some survivors prefer to eat after their presentations.
- Consider offering to take the survivor on a tour of your area during his or her visit.

Preparing the Venue

- Please have a glass of water accessible to the survivor during the presentation.
- Ensure that lighting is not directly in the survivor's eyes.
- Keep house lights on if the program takes place in a theater or auditorium; survivors often like to make eye contact with the audience.
- Provide a chair for the survivor, even if he or she intends to stand while speaking.
- Use microphones in larger venues; please discuss this with the survivor in advance so he or she is comfortable with the equipment (podium microphone, hand-held, lavalier, etc.).
- Find out if the survivor intends to invite guests and, if so, reserve seating for them.

Managing the Audience

- Please ask the audience to turn off all cell phones and pagers before the presentation begins.
- Ask the survivor’s permission in advance before videotaping his or her presentation. Some survivors prefer not to be filmed (If the survivor speaker is arranged through the Museum, an approval form will be provided before the event.)
- Photography is allowed after the presentation only if the survivor has previously agreed.
- Have the audience refrain from eating or drinking during the presentation.

Introducing the Survivor

- Explain why your organization is organizing a Days of Remembrance observance.
- Many survivors have prepared introductions that they will share with you. Talk with the survivor ahead of time to see how he or she would like to be introduced. If the speaker is arranged through the Museum, we will provide you with a brief biography to assist in your preparation.
- Keep the introduction short—no more than three minutes. Do not tell the survivor’s history for him or her; provide only a general outline.
- Sometimes survivors have a photograph of themselves before the war or images of their family and hometown which they want to show. If the survivor has visual material relating to his or her story, it may be incorporated into the introduction or used in the presentation. Please determine the survivor’s preference.
- Announce the length of the program and encourage audience members to stay for its completion—both to demonstrate respect for the survivor and to minimize disruptions.

Conducting a Question and Answer Session

- Encourage your audience to come prepared to ask questions.
- Always allow for ample time for audience questions; most survivors enjoy engaging with their audience, and the audience is often curious to learn more.
- It is recommended that you appoint a moderator for the question-and-answer session to prevent or curtail inappropriate discussion of political or other topics that may make the survivor uncomfortable.
- After a member of the audience asks a question, your moderator should repeat the question to ensure that both the survivor and the audience have heard it.

Following up on the Program

- Thank the survivor for coming by sending a formal letter of appreciation.
- Survivors appreciate receiving notes from members of the audience. For speakers arranged through the Museum, please have the notes sent to the Museum and we will forward them to the survivor. Do not give out the survivor’s address to the audience.
- You may want to present the survivor with a small gift to commemorate the experience.