



ILLINOIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM
& EDUCATION CENTER

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY COMMEMORATIVE GUIDE

Holocaust Remembrance Day (Hebrew: *יום האשמה* or *Yom HaShoah*) is a day of commemoration for the approximately six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust by Nazi Germany and its collaborators, and for the Jewish resistance in that period¹. The Holocaust is an event that can – and should – be remembered and commemorated by everyone, regardless of background or identity. Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center developed this guide to help those who wish to design and host their own Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorative event.

In 1981, Chicagoland Holocaust Survivors joined together to form the Holocaust Memorial Foundation of Illinois. They purchased a small Skokie storefront and made it available to the public, focusing on combating hate with education. The 65,000-square-foot Illinois Holocaust Museum & Education Center that opened in 2009 was a culmination of 30 years of hard work by the Survivor community. The Museum commemorates Holocaust Remembrance Day each year in honor of those Survivors, their family members, and the approximately six million Jews murdered in the Holocaust.

The internationally recognized date for Holocaust Remembrance Day corresponds to the 27th day of Nisan on the Hebrew calendar, which varies in relation to the Gregorian calendar. It marks the anniversary of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which was the largest Jewish uprising and one of the many acts of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust.

HOW DO YOU OBSERVE HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY?

There are multiple ways to honor those who survived and those who were murdered in the Holocaust. Each of the below observances can play a role in ensuring that the memory of the Holocaust is preserved, shared, and honored across generations.

CANDLE LIGHTING: Lighting candles is often a core part of commemorations. Local dignitaries, Survivors and their families, rescuers, or liberators are frequently invited to light candles. During the candle lighting, a short biography of the candle lighter, a poem, or literary selection may be read; music may be played; or both may be done. Six candles are typically lit, symbolic of the six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust.

THE POWER OF STORY: Illinois Holocaust Museum has recorded many Survivors sharing their stories. You can listen to some of these recordings as a way to honor the Survivors.

[Rodi Glass](#)² - Survivor of Amsterdam Ghetto, Westerbork Transit Camp, and Vittel Internment Camp

[Fritzie Fritzshall](#)³ - Survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, President Emeritus, Illinois Holocaust Museum

[Gadlina Novitsky](#)⁴ - Escapee, German-Occupied Ukraine

[Ernst Heimann](#)⁵ - Survivor of “Kristallnacht” and Kindertransport

1 Definition from United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tp5nwJLYL>

3 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xkW788pj2o>

4 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owCm8s75UqA>

5 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jyLhjc02rY>



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[Ida Paluch Kersz](#)¹ - Hidden Child, German-Occupied Poland

[Agnese Schwartz](#)² - Hidden Child, German-Occupied Hungary

Illinois Holocaust Museum also provides [many profiles of Survivors](#)³ on its website that can be used for this activity.

Hearing Survivors share their stories fosters empathy and emotional connection. It helps individuals relate to the human experiences behind historical facts, creating a deeper understanding of the impact of the Holocaust on individuals and families.

Educators and organizations may invite a member of Illinois Holocaust Museum's Speakers Bureau to speak at an event. Hearing directly from a Holocaust Survivor, or a Survivor's child or grandchild, can leave a lasting impact. For more information, please visit [the Museum's website](#)⁴.

KEYNOTE SPEECH: Sometimes, a keynote speech is given at commemorations. This speech can be given by a scholar, a Survivor, or a local dignitary. Depending on the audience, the subject may be about the Holocaust and/or link lessons of the Holocaust to the present day. Instead of featuring a keynote speaker, you/your organization may choose to organize a panel discussion involving a Holocaust scholar from a nearby university.

READING THE NAMES OF VICTIMS & SURVIVORS: Another meaningful and symbolic way to observe Holocaust Remembrance Day is to read the names of those who did not survive the Holocaust. [Unto Every Person There Is a Name](#)⁵ provides information about how to approach and successfully hold a name reading. Some organizations "adopt" a community that was impacted by the Holocaust and read the names of people from that community. Others read the names of family members from their local communities that were affected.

Reading the names of those who were impacted helps to personalize the Holocaust and connect people to individual stories of people who endured atrocities. It transforms the massive scale of tragedy into a collection of individual narratives, making it more personally relatable and impactful.

MUSIC AND POETRY: The arts are a universal language that can transcend linguistic and cultural barriers. This makes them particularly effective in reaching a wide audience and fostering a global understanding of the impact of the Holocaust.

[Music](#)⁶ and [Poetry](#)⁷, especially pieces written or performed by victims and Survivors during the Holocaust, can be particularly powerful while also providing a quiet space of reflection for those observing.

1 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjrJNQcjeaw>

2 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0xwiucZqnQ>

3 <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/learn/survivor-profiles/>

4 <https://www.ilholocaustmuseum.org/learn/book-a-speaker-community-adult-groups/>

5 <https://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/remembrance-day/pdf/every-person.pdf>

6 <https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20141010-dor-music.pdf>

7 <https://www.yadvashem.org/education/educational-materials/lesson-plans/poems-paintings.html>



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SOCIAL MEDIA: Social media is an excellent way for an individual or organization to share information about Holocaust Remembrance Day. Photos of Survivors and brief biographies can be shared, along with videos of testimonies, music, and poetry. Events such as candle lightings can be live streamed on many social media platforms.

PARTNERSHIPS: Collaborating with nearby civic and religious organizations, high schools, or colleges/universities can expand the reach of your Holocaust Remembrance Day program, extending its impact to a broader audience.

Holocaust Remembrance Day commemorations are a powerful tool for promoting awareness, preventing future atrocities, fostering understanding, and upholding the principles of human rights and dignity. It serves as a solemn obligation to remember and learn from the past to build a more just and compassionate future.

Should your organization arrange a Holocaust Remembrance Day program, please reach out to Illinois Holocaust Museum (education@ilhmec.org / **847.967.4840**) to ensure inclusion on its dedicated Holocaust Remembrance Day webpage. If your organization would like a member of Illinois Holocaust Museum's Board to make remarks at your event, please submit a request on [the Museum's website](#)¹.