

# NYS Lights up in Yellow to Commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day

By Henry Levy

Every January 27th since 2006, the anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp, the United Nations set aside a day dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews and five million other victims of Adolph Hitler's Nazi Germany.

If you were Jewish the Nazi's Final Solution had you targeted for extermination. Among the victims were 1.5 million children, those that were mentally ill, physically handicapped, gay, Romani, Serb or Slovene, Jehovah's Witness, Freemason, Ethnic Pole, Soviet POW, Spanish Republican or anyone who harbored or hid any of the above people.

A study by the Claims Conference in 2020 had shocking results.

Nearly 20% of Millennials and Gen Z in New York felt that Jews caused the Holocaust.

48% nationwide could not name a single Concentration Camp.

63% did not know that 6 million Jews were murdered and 36% thought it was 2 million or less.

49% have witnessed Holocaust denial or distortion on social media.

30% have seen Nazi symbols on social media platforms or in their community.

64% thought Holocaust education should be compulsory in schools.

80% thought it is important to continue to teach about the Holocaust so it doesn't ever happen again.

In a survey of 3600 North American students from grades six through twelve by Canadian based Liberation 75, released just one day before International Holocaust Remembrance Day, nearly 33 percent of students in elementary and high schools in the United States and Canada said they weren't sure if the Holocaust happened, or if it did, they thought it was "exaggerated or fabricated."

On January 27th, the United Nations Holocaust Outreach Programme dedicates two hours in the General Assembly for speeches by the Secretary General, President of the General Assembly, the Ambassadors from Israel, the United States and other countries and Holocaust survivors themselves to give testimony in the hope of preventing future genocides. (This year as well as in 2021 this event was held virtually).

But is this really enough when the need to educate to stop hate is clearly necessary?

This year a small coalition of like-minded organizations felt the necessity to make a bigger statement.

They decided to make a joint effort to light up New York State in yellow on January 27th to honor the victims of the Holocaust.

Looking at the photos on the preceding pages and the front page of the Jewish Post is proof of the success of their efforts.

Among the landmarks lit up and lighting ceremonies conducted are: Madison Square Garden, One World Trade Center, Niagara Falls, Gov. Mario Cuomo Bridge, Kosciuszko Bridge, FDR Mid-Hudson Bridge, Grand Central Terminal, Albany Int'l Airport Gateway, NYS Fairgrounds, Empire State Plaza, City Hall, Nassau County's Executive & Legislative Building, Suffolk County's Dennison Building, Westchester County Center, Queens, Bronx and Staten Island Borough Halls, State Education Building, MTA-LIRR - Gateway at Penn Station and others.

Many public officials as well as the team that coordinated this effort are in agreement that this will become an annual event.

Congratulations are in order to those "New York Goes Yellow" coalition members that stepped up to make this possible.

They include Andrea Bolender, Chair, Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County, Hindy Poupko, UJA-Federation NY, Scott Richman, ADL Dir. NY/NJ, Avi Posnick, StandWithUs Dir. NE, Eric Post, American Jewish Committee LI Dir, Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Exec. VP, New York Board of Rabbis, Bill Tinglin, Tour for Tolerance, Mindy Perlmutter, JCRC-LI Exec. Dir., Millie Jasper, Holocaust and Human Rights Education Center, Exec. Dir., 3GNY, Voices for Truth and Humanity, Board Members Jack Britvan, Angel Cepeda, Glen Landow & Noel Rabb and Hank Levy, Jewish Post publisher.

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**The following are comments from those responsible for the success of New York Goes Yellow on International Holocaust Remembrance Day:**

"It is said that one day when we are asked from loved ones taken from us, 'What did you do after we left you?', we will answer, 'We never forgot you. The Yellow Light Campaign is a visible reminder that we will not only pray for the the victims of the Shoah, but pledge to combat anti-Semitism through meaningful mandatory Holocaust education that reaches the hearts and minds of future generations.'" **Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, Exec. VP, New York Board of Rabbis.**

"The Holocaust Memorial and Tolerance Center of Nassau County is proud to have been a part of the extraordinary team that created NY Goes Yellow. Every point of light represents a life that was extinguished during the Holocaust. We hope this annual event will become a beacon to

the world to shine a light on anti-Semitism and all manifestations of hate." **Andrea Bolender, Chairman of the Board of Directors**

"We are Holocaust survivors, educators, students, all working together for a peaceful, humane world that respects human dignity among all people, promoting tolerance, our common humanity, and the importance of individual and civic responsibility." **Bill Tinglin, Tour for Tolerance.**

"At ADL, we know first-hand that education and awareness are critical ways to fight antisemitism and all forms of hate. We are grateful to the many iconic New York State sites which were bathed in yellow light, bringing awareness to all that it was International Holocaust Remembrance Day. You stood in solidarity with people around the world who recommitted themselves to never again let hate get out of hand." **Scott Richman, ADL Regional Dir. NY/NJ.**

"At StandWithUs, an international education organization that fights antisemitism, we feel that Holocaust education and remembrance are critical to preventing anti-Jewish bigotry and other dangerous forms of hate. It is especially important for our students, the leaders of tomorrow. In honor of this international day of remembrance, StandWithUs has launched its new Holocaust Education Center, with a user-friendly tool-box of educational materials and programs for teens and young adults. You can see more HERE." **Avi Posnick, Regional Dir. NE & New England.**

"The Jewish Community Relations Council of Long Island was honored to work with a wonderful group of colleagues as we commemorated International Holocaust Remembrance Day by lighting up New York in yellow. We did this in memory of all those who were murdered and those who survived the Holocaust. Elie Wiesel stated, 'for the dead and the living, we must bear witness' and bearing witness is exactly what these amazing organizations, individuals, and New York State did. We must always remember and never forget." **Mindy Perlmutter, Exec. Dir., JCRC-LI.**

Never Again begins with education. The Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center makes sure that every student in Westchester County has access to appropriate instruction about the Holocaust. Our dedicated teachers share the finest curriculum which includes inviting Holocaust survivors from our Speakers Bureau to speak in the classroom. Westchester County Executive George Latimer continues to show steadfast support in Holocaust remembrance and on January 27 lit the Westchester County

Center yellow with the words, "Westchester County Recognizes International Holocaust Remembrance Day." **Millie Jasper, Exec. Dir., Holocaust & Human Rights Education Center.**

"New York Goes Yellow was an important campaign to raise awareness of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the necessity of Holocaust education and the urgent need to combat Holocaust denial, distortion, and inappropriate comparisons to current day events." **Eric Post, AJCLI Director and Joshua Kramer, AJCNY Director.**

"Voices for Truth and Humanity was proud to play a part in New York Goes Yellow, the bathing of landmarks throughout New York State in yellow light on International Holocaust Remembrance Day in memory of the millions of innocents slaughtered during the Holocaust. In their memories we say Never Again. It is vital that we establish a curriculum in our public schools on the lessons of the Holocaust, slavery, and all genocides to insure that future generations will be neither victims of hate, nor bystanders." **Glen J. Landow, Executive Board Member.**

"We remember the millions murdered in the Holocaust and recommit ourselves to keeping their memories alive. New York will continue to welcome everyone with open arms and to fight against antisemitism that still plagues our world. We will never forget." **NYS Governor, Kathy Hochul.**

"Today, we remember the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, and vow to Never Forget. As home to the largest Jewish population in the world outside of Israel, New York City stands united in our opposition to antisemitism in all its forms and will always stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our Jewish brothers and sisters against hate." **NYC Mayor Eric Adams**

"I want to thank Mayor Adams for his recognition of this important remembrance day and ensuring that antisemitism has no place in New York. The World Jewish Congress combats antisemitism, as well as other heinous forms of hatred and xenophobia." **Ronald S. Lauder, President, World Jewish Congress.**

"UJA-Federation of New York is committed to ensuring that Holocaust survivors can live out their lives with dignity, comfort and support. This campaign was an important effort to bring awareness to Holocaust Remembrance Day and we are grateful to all the community partners for their work to light up iconic New York institutions." **Hindy Poupko, UJA-Federation of New York.**