Together, Restoring Their Names

Service Trip to Poland

October 29 - November 4, 2015
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Our Guiding Vision

For almost three generations, American Jews have visited Poland in the context of Holocaust memorial tours aimed almost exclusively at Jews. Heavily scripted, these so-called “death camp tours” sometimes climax with a flight to Israel, a transition emphasizing that country’s centrality to post-Holocaust Jewish survival. So much Jewish history remains unseen and untouched in Poland, and few visitors - Jewish or otherwise - ever interact with that rich past, much less have an opportunity to share it with the world.

As millennials learn about and confront the horrors of the Holocaust, some world actors call for the annihilation of Israel. Others deny the Holocaust ever took place, or the existence of such a thing as the Jewish people. As a future approaches without eyewitnesses to the Holocaust, there is an urgent need to craft a new kind of experience for young adults in Poland – one that engages not only Jews, but their peers of all backgrounds, and one that facilitates Poles and Jews working together to make the vow, “Never Again,” a reality.
The partnership between Combined Jewish Philanthropies’ IACT Initiative and From The Depths on “Together, Restoring Their Names,” is intended to be a first step in modeling what such missions to Poland can look like. We use the word “mission” intentionally, since our students have been tasked with helping to restore the names and memories of Holocaust victims murdered in Poland. We will memorialize and commemorate, and we will insert ourselves into how the Holocaust’s aftermath plays out in the country where more than 3,000,000 Jews were murdered.

During our five days on the ground, students will work hand-in-hand with Poles of many backgrounds to recover Jewish history, most of which was wiped out. We will excavate Jewish tombstones used by the Nazis to make roads, and help restore an abandoned synagogue not used since the Holocaust. We will learn from and serve with dozens of From the Depths volunteers throughout Poland, including firemen and “strongmen”, and we will tour sites important to both Holocaust memory and Poland’s Jewish future.

Thank you for your interest in this important project.

To receive post-trip testimonials and videos, please email mattl@cjp.org.

Visit FromTheDepths.org to learn more about current projects in Poland.
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Itinerary

October 29
Depart Boston at night

Revival or Remnant?
Day One - October 30
Arrive in Warsaw in the early afternoon
Shabbat services and dinner at a local Synagogue

The Jews in Poland
Day Two - October 31
Visit the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews
Tour of historic locations in the Warsaw Ghetto
Havdala (Shabbat conclusion) service at The Warsaw Zoo
Tour of Warsaw Zoo, where matzevas (Jewish tombstones) were used to pave roads
Exclusive dinner in the Zoo Director’s Villa, where 300 Jews were saved
Vigil in the Warsaw Ghetto at the exact moment of the 75th Anniversary of the roundup

Restoring Their Names
Day Three - November 1
Search for matzevas in the forest small town of Rozprza
Commemoration with the local fire department and school at the Jewish cemetery
Travel to another village, Radoszyce, where a house is built fully of matzevas
Meet the young couple who own the house
Return matzevas from the house to a local Jewish cemetery
Memorial ceremony and educational session in the Jewish cemetery
Travel to Krakow for dinner in the famous restaurant, Herring Embassy
Midnight tour of the Plaszow Concentration Camps
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Itinerary

Auschwitz and After
Day Four - November 2
Tour of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp and Museum
Free time to explore Kazimierz, the historic Jewish district of Krakow
Meeting at the Jewish Community Center with Non-Jewish and Jewish volunteers
Educational session about the current Jewish community in Poland
Group dinner with Jewish Community Center volunteers
Free time to explore Krakow’s Old Town

Never Again
Day Five - November 3
Travel to the rural town of Slomniki
Visit a mass grave and cemetery
Volunteer at the local historic Synagogue, restoring a room to beauty
Travel to Olkusz to dismantle a wall at the local school which is made of matzevas
Work with “Strongman Team Poland” to move the heavy matzevas
Travel to the village Nowy Sacz
Meet with a Holocaust survivor who still lives in Poland
Visit a recently discovered Jewish hiding place, one of only two known to exist
Dinner with local activists
Travel to the city of Kielce
Visit sites related to the 1946 Kielce Pogrom
Travel back to Warsaw for a closing reflection session in the Warsaw Ghetto

November 4
Depart Warsaw to return to Boston
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Staff and Participants

Jonny Daniels
Founder & Executive Director
From The Depths

Matt Lebovic
Associate Director, Campus Services
Combined Jewish Philanthropies

Lena Klaudel
Director in Eastern Europe
From The Depths

Shoshana Gibbor
IACT Birthright Coordinator
Wellesley College and MIT

Elan Kawesch
Photographer
ICR

Robert Skorupa
Researcher
From The Depths

Apoorva Arora
Wellesley College
Class of 2016

Arianna Regalado
Wellesley College
Class of 2018

Cecilia Nowell
Wellesley College
Class of 2016

Chelsea Roston
Wellesley College
Class of 2019

Delanie Goerig
Wellesley College
Class of 2016

Makalani Mack
Brandeis University
Class of 2016

Misha Vilenchuk
Brandeis University
Class of 2016

Roza Trilesskaya
Wellesley College
Class of 2016
Jonny Daniels
Founder & Executive Director, From The Depths

Jonny Daniels is Founder and Executive Director of From the Depths, a Polish-Israeli-American NGO whose goal is to bring the memory of the Holocaust to the next generation. The Foundation works with individuals Holocaust survivors and Jewish communities around the world, particularly from Eastern Europe. Jonny Daniels was the initiator and organizer of the 69th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of the Holocaust. On the occasion of this event on January 27, 2014 in Auschwitz-Birkenau, and Krakow the majority of Israel’s Parliament and over 100 representatives from the Polish government, European governments, world governments, and a bi-partisan U.S congressional delegation. From the Depths is currently running a nationwide project in Poland, called The Matzeva Project (www.matzeva.org), which deals with the documentation and restoration of over 1300 pre-war Jewish cemeteries and collecting matzevas (Jewish tombstones) used as a building materials all over Poland. The matzevas act as an ice breaker allowing the foundation to uncover artifacts that are changing the way we look at Holocaust education as well as unique sites such as dozens of unknown mass graves of Jews murdered in the Holocaust, and most recently, the last remaining hideout used by Jews in the Holocaust.

Jonny Daniels was born in London, in a traditional Jewish family, the eldest of three siblings. At age 18, after finishing high school, he moved to Israel, where he spent a year studying in Yeshiva. He also worked as a volunteer in Zichron Menachem, an organization that helps children suffering from cancer. Following this he decided to live in Israel permanently and he joined the Israel Defense Forces. After three years of service in the 890 Paratroopers unit where he finished with the rank of staff sergeant, he began his studies in political science at Bar-Ilan University, near Tel Aviv. He soon became an advisor to the Deputy Speaker of the Knesset. In subsequent years, he was an advisor to the Deputy Minister of Defense of Israel Danny Danon and other politicians in Israel, the US and European countries. He has appeared on dozens of media outlets as an expert on the Holocaust, including Fox News, CNN, The Wall Street Journal, BBC and many others.
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Matt Lebovic
Associate Director, Campus Services, CJP
Since the age of nine, Matt has read hundreds of books about the Holocaust and its aftermath. For the past three years, he has researched and written Holocaust-related feature stories for The Times of Israel, alongside implementing Shoah programs on Boston campuses in his role at CJP's IACT Initiative. Matt holds a BA from Boston University in Public Relations, and an MA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in Society and Politics in Israel. Other relevant credentials include teaching “Facing History and Ourselves” at religious school; helping found Boston’s 3G group for the grandchildren of survivors, and serving as liaison to the Boston survivor community and New England Holocaust Memorial.

Lena Klaudel
Director in Eastern Europe, From The Depths
Lena Klaudel is an archaeologist and public relations expert, originally from Warsaw. Lena obtained degrees from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology as well as the University of Warsaw. As Director in Eastern Europe at From The Depths, she coordinates archaeological and historic education programs with thousands of volunteers across the region. Before joining From The Depths, Lena worked in the press office at the Polish Ministry of Interior, as well as positions high up in multiple firms, where she worked with blue-chip clients such as Levis, Coca-Cola, and Zara.
Shoshana Gibbor

IACT Birthright Coordinator, Wellesley College and MIT

Originally from Toms River, New Jersey, Shoshana Gibbor brings passion to the position of Birthright Coordinator by fusing together her love for Judaism and Israel with outreach and engagement programming. Her philosophy is all about meeting the student where he/she is at and walking side by side on their journey of discovery. Shoshana seeks out students interested in exploring more about their Jewish heritage, while connecting them with the opportunity of participating in a Birthright trip experience. Shoshana received a Bachelor's degree from Hofstra University and a Master's degree from Monmouth University.

Elan Kawesch

Photographer, Israel Campus Roundtable

Elan Kawesch is a 19 year old professional photojournalist from Boston. In addition to his work with the Israel Campus Roundtable, convened by Combined Jewish Philanthropies, his photographs have been featured by Harvard University, The Boston Globe, The Times of Israel, and countless other media outlets and organizations. His work has taken him across the globe to almost two dozen countries, including a July, 2015 trip to Poland with From The Depths, where Elan photographed the discovery of the first known Jewish hiding place still in existence in Poland. His photos from that day in the rural village of Rekowka were featured exclusively in The Wall Street Journal.
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Robert Skorupa
Researcher, From The Depths
Robert Skorupa is a researcher and field assistant for From The Depths. Originally from the small town of Rozprza in south-central Poland, he now lives in Warsaw where he is studying for his masters degree in history at the University of Warsaw. Robert is also a volunteer fireman in Rozprza, and has created connections between the Polish community in his town and the Jewish history of their area. To further that effort, Robert co-founded Rozprzanie.pl, an organization which encourages his community to learn about the history of the region which surrounds Rozprza.

Apoorva Arora
Wellesley College, Class of 2016
Born in Chandigarh, India, Apoorva is a senior at Wellesley College studying Economics. Since her young start at the United World College of India, an international school in Mumbai, Apoorva was exposed to a host of different cultures. Since then, she has developed an interest in hearing people’s stories, learning about their diverse backgrounds and cultures. Apoorva continues this on campus, where she is involved in Slater International, an organization which brings together all the international students at Wellesley. Apoorva is also a senior supervisor at the Wellesley Fund, the fundraising organization for the financial aid department.
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Arianna Regalado
Wellesley College, Class of 2018
Arianna studies religion and political science. Hailing from Long Beach, California, Arianna motivates her engagement on campus through three pillars: leadership, justice, and intellectual curiosity. She is the treasurer of the Pre-Law Society, a member of the mentorship program in the Latina Cultural Organization, and a research fellow in Wellesley's Religion Department. While this trip will be her first time overseas, Arianna is involved in AIPAC and is fascinated by the Jewish community as a people. Before college, Arianna regularly participated in Holocaust programming where she met survivors, and learned to understand the significance of remembrance.

Cecilia Nowell
Wellesley College, Class of 2016
Cecilia Nowell is a senior at Wellesley College originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico. She studies Comparative Literature and Political Science and is also co-Editor-in-Chief of the campus non-fiction magazine, Counterpoint. Cecilia deeply interested in whether art might have social implications—and she has tried to look at art and literature under varying political conditions to assess this question. To explore this topic, Cecilia has done work to preserve cultural histories as an archivist, summary writer, and photographer for Diarna Digital Heritage Mapping—an online museum of Jewish life in the Middle East and North Africa—over the past two years.
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Chelsea Roston
Wellesley College, Class of 2019

New to the Wellesley Community, Chelsea is originally from Northern California. In addition to her active role in Hillel on campus, Chelsea also plays the saxophone in the Wellesley BlueJazz group and regularly takes lessons to improve her craft. In her youth, Chelsea's Confirmation class from synagogue took a trip to Washington D.C. to participate in L’Taken, a Religious Action Center program to learn about political advocacy in a Jewish way. Chelsea visited the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, which impacted her greatly. Since that visit, Chelsea has strived to educate society about acceptance, coexistence, and responsibility to prevent another event of hatred and ignorance.

Delanie Goerig
Wellesley College, Class of 2016

Delanie Goerig is a senior at Wellesley College who studies cultural anthropology. Growing up in Wichita Falls, Texas, Delanie heard stories about her family, who escaped from Russia before the Holocaust. Delanie is active on Wellesley's campus, including roles in Hillel and House Council. She also works in the libraries on campus as a student manager and digital/research assistant. After visiting Israel as a participant on Birthright Israel, Delanie felt a stronger connection to her Jewish heritage, and is looking forward to furthering that connection on this meaningful trip to Poland.
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Makalani Mack
Brandeis University, Class of 2016

Makalani Mack is a senior at Brandeis University majoring in Anthropology. He is originally from Miami and Atlanta. Makalani was awarded the POSSE scholarship, a full tuition leadership scholarship given to him in order to attend Brandeis. On campus Makalani is a sprinter on the varsity track and field team and is also a member of the theater department. Makalani is a pilot member of Brandeis Bridges; a cohort of students thriving to better the relations between Black and Jewish students on campus. He is also a member of the advisory board for the Men of Color Alliance, who collaborate to create spaces for men of all races to interact in meaningful ways.

Misha Vilenchuk
Brandeis University, Class of 2016

Michael (Misha) Vilenchuk is a senior from Columbus, Ohio pursing degrees in Russian, Judaic Studies, and History at Brandeis. Misha involves himself in dialogue, human rights issues, and Israel advocacy, including Black-Jewish Brandeis Bridges initiative. He is the 2015-2016 recipient of the Brandeis Alumni & Friends Scholarship, EMET Fellowship, and the Jerome A. Schiff Academic Fellowship, as well as is the reigning Greater Boston Chess Champion. Misha is also the founder and president of the Coalition Against Anti-Semitism in Europe (CAASE), the student-led grassroots initiative that documents anti-Semitism and works alongside European student counterparts.
Roza Trilesskaya
Wellesley College, Class of 2016

Roza is a senior at Wellesley College, studying Economics. She has been involved in Jewish communities of Saint Petersburg, Russia, where she was born; San Francisco, California where she was raised; Sydney, Australia, while studying abroad; and Wellesley College. On this trip, she is looking forward to learning more about the histories and traditions of the European Jewish communities in which her ancestors lived. On campus, Roza is the Social Chair of Hillel and treasurer of Wellesley Friends of Israel. After graduation, she hopes to work in consulting or finance.
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October 18, 2015
“New program looks to reinvent the Holocaust memorial tour”
Project to incorporate a service component excavating Jewish tombstones in Poland.
by Sam Sokol

A program being launched this month is seeking to change young people’s perceptions of the Holocaust by bringing students, both Jewish and non-Jewish, on archaeological service tours of Poland.

Called “Together, Restoring Their Names,” the program, an alternative to “heavily scripted... death camp tours” such as March of the Living, aims to “craft a new kind of experience for young adults in Poland – one that engages not only Jews, but their peers of all backgrounds,” according to its organizers.

A joint project of IACT, a Birthright followup initiative run by Boston’s Combined Jewish Philanthropies, and Israel’s From The Depths NGO, the project will involve participants in examining Jewish life prior to the Holocaust and incorporate a service component excavating Jewish tombstones used for road building by the Germans.

“Our mission statement at 'From The Depths' is to make sure our generation, the third and fourth generation since the Holocaust, stand as witnesses to the witnesses, making Holocaust memory and memorial relevant to us. This remarkable partnership between ourselves and CJP shows the deep interest reclaiming this past, by traveling to Poland on a service and memorial trip with both Jewish and non-Jewish students alike,” From The Depths founder Jonny Daniels told The Jerusalem Post.

“This upcoming trip is a true first,” he continued. “We will be working alongside Polish firemen, students and even 'Poland's strongest man' to remove Jewish tombstones stolen over 60 years ago by Poles and return them to the local Jewish cemetery. This focus on physical work and partnerships with young locals is what makes this trip so unique, and what has led to countless groups around the world reaching out to us, looking too to prepare 'Service and Memorial' trips to Poland.”
Matt Lebovic, director of campus services at CJP, said that “Students today want to visit a place like Poland and do more than mourn, which has been the traditional model.”

“Students want to bear witness, but beyond that they want to play a restorative role. This trip was crafted using findings from other Jewish service-learning experiences, largely in Israel. Involving non-Jewish students was essential from the get-go. There is Holocaust denial in the world, and ongoing calls to annihilate Israel. We need allies and partners to ensure another genocide does not take place, this time against Israel,” he said.

“For many years, there has been a notion in the American Jewish community that Jewish youth have been overloaded with the Holocaust, and that this 'overload' is somehow damaging to their Jewish identity.

“In our rush to sort of ‘bury’ the Holocaust and not have young people identify too closely with it, what actually wound up happening is that today’s Jewish college students know almost nothing about the Holocaust, much less anything about Europe's treatment of Jews in the centuries leading up to it. There is no understanding of Israelis' psychology, much less of the condition of the Jewish people around the world today, without studying the Holocaust,” he added.

The program will have a “huge emotional impact,” said CJP President Barry Shrage.

Examining a thousand years of Jewish civilization in Poland will be very significant for students, he continued, adding that while there is no “perfect followup” for everyone returning from Birthright, programs like this are very important in adding to the multiplicity of post-Birthright options that are now being made available.

One of the participants in the upcoming trip is Makalani Mack, a senior at Brandeis University who serves as a member of the board of the Men of Color Alliance and is active in building relations between the campus's African American and Jewish students.

“I’m going on the trip to Poland to better my knowledge of the Holocaust and what that traumatic event did to the Jewish community, and to also further my efforts in working for solidarity between Jewish and Black people because I do believe that we share similar pasts,” Mack said.

“I'm overwhelmingly excited about this opportunity and am very appreciative to everyone making this possible for me.”
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