

INTRODUCTION TO OUR REMEMBRANCE

2020 has been a year like no other in recent history. We are in the middle of a pandemic and life as we know it has been altered significantly. Sadly, this has led to widespread health problems and many lives have been taken much too soon. A related impact has been that gatherings of all kinds, including solemn occasions like our traditional annual Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program, have been cancelled to keep people distant and safe.

Although we will not hold a live event this year to commemorate Holocaust Remembrance Day (in Hebrew, Yom HaShoah), our inter-agency committee has worked hard to develop an alternative Holocaust educational “program” – which you will find laid out on the main page of www.holocaustremembrance.org. In it, we salute two Holocaust survivors – Steven Fennes and Lisl Schick, our scheduled speakers for this year’s live program – who courageously survived the Holocaust, have gone on to live beautiful lives, and selflessly dedicate themselves to educating the public so we Never Forget the horrors perpetrated by the Nazis. You will find video presentations by and other information about them on the website.

Nazi persecution of the Jewish people began in the early 1930s. On November 9, 1938, known as *Kristallnacht* (The Night of Broken Glass), the Nazis carried out a **pogrom** against German Jews, damaging or destroying close to 300 synagogues and 7,000 Jewish businesses, arresting tens of thousands of Jews, and killing 100 or more. Hitler intended to exterminate all nine million Jews of Europe; the Holocaust resulted in the Nazis and collaborators murdering six million Jewish men, women, and children. [Here is a short video about the Holocaust.](#)

The Nazis in their “Final Solution” targeted Jews, but as Nazi hunter Simon Wiesenthal said:

It is not a written law that the next victims must be Jews. It can also be *other* people. We saw it begin in Germany with Jews, but people from more than twenty other nations were also murdered.

And so, we also remember that the Nazis murdered millions of others, including Roma, Communists, gay men, and people with disabilities.

The words “Never Forget” are often used in association with the Holocaust. Why? There are a number of reasons, but one is to pay respect to the survivors by being there for them **now**, by listening as they share with the world what they witnessed and endured, and by so doing, hopefully learn that it is **our responsibility** to act in the face of evil - not stand by as so many did back then - so that we never see such suffering and loss again. **Please don’t be a bystander!**

I wish you good health, speedy recovery for the ill, and better days in the future for all of us. Thank you for your interest in learning about the Holocaust.

Jeff Knishkowy
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Chair, Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Committee