

## How we began

We opened in 1995 as *Beth Shalom* ('House of Peace'), Britain's first ever place of Holocaust remembrance and learning. Our founders are the remarkable Smith family, the only non-Jewish founders of any such place in the UK. The family had visited Yad Vashem and returned home appalled that so little was known here about the Holocaust. They were also keen to inspire others to take responsibility for the 2,000 years of Christian Judeophobia which enabled the Holocaust, and which provides the reservoir of myths and conspiracy theories from which anti-Semites continue to draw, usually unknowingly, today.

Based in the beautiful Sherwood Forest area - rich not only in Robin Hood folklore but ironically, England's own anti-Jewish history - we became a home-from-home for inspiring speakers: survivors of the Holocaust. An extension of the Smith family, they attracted ever-growing adult and school audiences.

*"I know many Holocaust museums all over the world. There is none like Beth Shalom. It is unique... the only one I always leave uplifted".* Eva Schloss MBE, Auschwitz survivor and step-sister of Anne Frank.

One by one, our family of survivors asked if they could entrust to our care the various artefacts substantiating their stories. In this way, we evolved over 25 years from a single exhibition in a rural family home into a nationally accredited museum with prestigious 'National Portfolio Organisation' status from Arts Council England. The museum will always exist to serve our educational purpose. The testimonies of our cherished family of Survivors are epicentral to our output, and our governance remains true to the Smiths' warm family ethos. Marina and Eddie Smith, now in their 80s, live on the estate. Their son Dr James Smith CBE remains actively involved and is our Life President, as well as overseeing the Aegis Trust which works to prevent genocide and runs the Kigali genocide memorial in Rwanda. James' co-founder and brother Dr Stephen Smith MBE was our first ever Director and now heads Steven Spielberg's USC Shoah Foundation in Los Angeles.

## What we do

We are an educational charity. We offer Primary and Secondary school learning programmes developed by our in-house team of professional educators. They are underpinned by the survivor testimonies and artefacts in our museum collections, and are developed under the pedagogic guidance of our Expert Guidance Group of world-class Holocaust academics. Some 40,000 school students participate each year — since Covid-19, in a combination of digital and physical formats.

We operate a three-part visitor ecosystem:

- ▶ **You can come to us:** our museum is open to the public, schools and other group visits. We often broker difficult conversations. With a strong interfaith heritage that is unique among Holocaust museums and educators, we offer a warm, comfortable environment in which to encourage uncomfortable dialogue between people of all faiths and of none.
- ▶ **We can come to you:** schools outreach and touring exhibitions.
- ▶ **Learn with us online too:** live school webinars, live adult talks and panel sessions, membership content access, downloadable video learning exercises.

## Our exhibitions and learning products

### 1. Museum

- i. **Memorial Gardens:** including Childrens Memorial, 16 sculptures and the remembrance of over 1,000 Holocaust victims with a single white rose, each with their own name plaque.
- ii. **Main Holocaust Exhibition:** pre-war Jewish life, anti-Semitism, Third Reich, ghettos, Final Solution, survival.

- iii. **Collections:** some 3,000 artefacts and photographs and growing. We are custodians of an Internationally significant collection of Holocaust artefacts.
- iv. **The Journey:** multi-platform experience immersing you in the life of Leo, a young Jewish boy in 1930s Berlin, and his escape on the Kindertransport. You can come to us for the award-winning walkthrough exhibition. We can bring the 'exhibition in a suitcase' version to your classroom. Or you can buy the **interactive app** version too — a highly immersive 'story game' developed over three years with painstaking historical research, high-quality production values and superb accompanying lesson plans for home and class based learning respectively.
- v. **The Forever Project:** multi-platform experience enabling a Q&A with a Holocaust survivor even when they are no longer alive. This is our second flagship asset with which to future-proof Holocaust education for the coming post-Survivor era. Available as a large-scale museum installation, mobile and web experience. *The Forever Project* currently includes ten Holocaust survivors. (In a spin-off venture, it also extends to survivors in other countries, speaking other languages, as well as role models from the cultural arts).
- vi. **Short films:** the 'hook' for several Secondary School learning programmes, attracting millions of views, widespread TV, press and social media coverage and multiple film festival awards. They are central to our strategy to engage new audiences in modern, 'relatable' language:
  - [www.standup.film](http://www.standup.film): 2-minute viral film featuring 24 stars of English football's Premier League
  - <https://www.edek.film>: 6-minute multi award-winning Hip Hop Holocaust music video
  - <https://darknessandlight.film>: 2-minute viral film highlighting links between anti-Black and anti-Jewish hate
- vii. **Livestream talk series:** originated during Lockdown and now thanks to its success, an ongoing programme. Series include the 8-part series *Matters of Artefact*, 3-part series *Britain: Holocaust Bystander or Upstander?* and a 6-part series launching *The Journey App*.

### Why we do what we do

The Holocaust was the product of the world's longest hatred: anti-Jewish stereotyping and conspiracy theory. It was a founding pillar of Western society and is increasingly in evidence again today. We therefore communicate the memory of the Holocaust for a contemporary purpose: to cultivate the critical thinking skills that can counter this and all forms of hate in our society.

We believe critical thinking is a transferable skill. The more critical thinkers we cultivate, the closer we will get to becoming an open-minded society where racial myths are debunked and difference is valued rather than feared.

Our purpose is urgent. We will soon lose our greatest teachers - living Holocaust survivors - at a time when power structures of mass hate have re-formed. Social media, anti-democratic governments and radicalism have institutionalised a global culture of misinformation and conspiracy theory that is spawning persecution. Many mistruths are the same ones spread by the Nazis. But today the spread is global and at internet speed. We need bold, creative solutions to educate against the daily flow of misinformation, making the warnings of the Holocaust resonate for generations born long after it.

### What they say

*"The children were engaged and enthralled throughout. They loved the opportunity to work collaboratively with both artefacts and iPad. The chance to see and listen to first-hand accounts from survivors was really powerful. Weaving videos and questioning to deepen children's understanding, step by step, worked perfectly."* Primary School teacher. Outwood Primary Academy, Barnsley

*"Every student left the session understanding the dangers of prejudiced views, the ability to identify hate crimes, and a range of ways to respond."* Secondary School teacher. St Paul's School, London