



Teens Across North America Commemorate Yom HaShoah by Inviting Holocaust Survivors Into Their Living Rooms

In the first large-scale effort in the U.S. and Canada, Zikaron BaSalon, an Israeli program designed to connect young people with the events of the Holocaust in an intimate, informal way, launches as a teen-led initiative

Contact: Laurie Kamens: kamens@usci.org, 646.519.9291

NEW YORK, NY—This Yom HaShoah (April 15) for the first time ever, hundreds of Jewish teens across North America will commemorate the Holocaust in a uniquely personal way. Through a program organized by United Synagogue Youth (USY), hundreds of teens will invite Holocaust survivors into their homes, asking them to share their experiences as part of [Zikaron BaSalon](#), Memories in the Living Room.

This new approach to Yom HaShoah was conceived in Israel in 2010 by students who sought to better connect young people to the history and meaning of the Holocaust by making its remembrance less formal and more personal and interactive.

Zikaron BaSalon “offers an opportunity connect with the memory of the Holocaust in a different, meaningful way,” according to the group’s web site. “It makes an intimate space for a heavy discussion by bringing the living, breathing memory of the Holocaust into... your living room.”

The program asks young people to invite a Holocaust survivor into their home to speak to a group of 15-40 people. The up-close-and-personal testimony is then followed by an artistic/creative activity, which could range from watching a short film, to singing songs, to sharing a reading. Finally, there is a moderator-led discussion relating the evening’s themes to contemporary issues such as racism, foreign relations, or how we commemorate the Holocaust.

USYers are organizing these events in several cities across North America, including New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Toronto, Vancouver, Sacramento, St. Louis, San Diego, and more. Additionally, USY will broadcast a live stream of a talk by famed artist and Holocaust survivor Fred Terna in New York City, which will be available to both teens and the general public at 7PM on April 15.

Zikaron BaSalon was brought to USY by Michal Chacham, an Israel native and USY's International *Shlichah* (Israel educator) from the Jewish Agency. "In Israel there's a certain formal way of observing Yom HaShoah, and you can grow apart from that," Chacham said, referring to the national observance of the holiday, marked by a siren and state ceremonies.

"In Israel, Zikaron BaSalon has made the Holocaust much more relevant to young people, and I believe it can do the same thing for American teens. Plus it gives them a lens for looking at contemporary Israeli society."

By inviting both friends and other community members into their homes, "teens are bridging both a cultural and generational gap," said Rabbi David Levy, who oversees USY as United Synagogue's Director of Teen Learning. "They're acting as agents to help connect generations of Jews to the events of the Holocaust and its present day implications."

Though this year will mark the first time that teens helm the initiative, it isn't the program's first introduction abroad. In 2013 Zikaron BaSalon expanded beyond Israel's borders with meetings springing up in the United States and Canada, usually hosted by Israelis living abroad. This year hundreds of meetings will take place in Jewish homes around the world from the U.S. and Canada to India, Germany, Ghana, Australia, and beyond.

For more information or to attend a Zikaron BaSalon meeting in your area please contact Laurie Kamens at kamens@uscj.org or 646-519-9291.

###

About United Synagogue Youth

USY is Conservative Judaism's premiere youth group, run by its parent organization, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism. With over 350 local chapters, USY boasts a membership of thousands of teens throughout the United States and Canada.

For more than 60 years USY has taught the young Jews the values and skills they need to become exceptional leaders in their religious and secular communities. USY's focus on leadership, social action, and relationship building has produced successful alumni with a deep sense of pride in and love for their Jewish identity.

Through year round programming and domestic and international travel opportunities, USY provides meaningful, immersive Jewish experiences, helping teens integrate Jewish rituals and values into their everyday lives.

For more information visit www.usy.org.

About United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism

The United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism is a network of hundreds of North American congregations that are committed to a dynamic Judaism, which is learned and passionate, authentic and pluralistic, joyful and accessible, egalitarian or traditional.

It represents more than one million North American Jews. More information is available at www.uscj.org.