

PRESIDENT PESCOVITZ'S REMARKS

Holocaust Memorial Center

August 18, 2021

- Thank you, Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld, and the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus.
- Thank you to Oakland University Board of Trustee Bobby Schostak for all you do for OU, and our community.
- And thank you to Cis Maisel, for your ongoing support and friendship. Because of your generosity, Oakland University's Cis Maisel Center for Judaic Studies and Community Engagement is a hub for education and community outreach.
 - Because of Cis Maisel and the leadership of center director Mike Pytlik, we are creating new collaborations and building a new level of understanding about Judaism in southeast Michigan and beyond.
- I'd also like to thank Oakland Professor Derek Hastings, who will give us an up-close and historical perspective on the brutal conditions of the Lodz ghetto, and the importance of understanding our history, so compellingly captured in "Rywka's Diary."

< P A U S E >

- When I visit the Holocaust Memorial Center, I am reminded of the lives of members of my mother’s family, who were imprisoned in the Lodz ghetto during the Nazi occupation...
 - And, I’m reminded of my ancestors who perished at the Auschwitz concentration camp...
 - In remembering them, they remain alive in my thoughts and acts.

- And now, with the narrative account presented in “Rywka’s Diary,” I’m so appreciative that my ancestors’ lives are recounted and their travails recalled vividly. The diary keeps alive the historical memory of the tragedy that has impacted so many of us personally.

- The writings of a teenaged girl named Rywka Lipszyc should remind us of why we must testify when we see injustice.
 - As an historical document, the diary is a tribute to the people of Lodz ghetto, common people of deep faith who loved their families and were forced into subservience...suffering from malnutrition and religious oppression.
 - We do not forget them because their plight requires us to remember what happens when evil is not confronted.

- Of the many impressive qualities of the diary, I find it remarkable that a teenage girl, in the face of incarceration, brutality and death, doesn’t waver in her commitment to Judaism and her faith in humanity.

- Faith and hope.
 - They are the centerpiece of our Jewish faith and culture.

- Faith and hope are the inspiration at the heart of our journey as a people.

- My faith and hope are a gift from my parents, each of whom lived amazing lives.
 - And while they are no longer with us, they are never far from me.

- A few weeks ago, my father, Rabbi Richard Hirsch, passed away.
 - He lived an epic life.

 - He spent the 1960s bringing Jews and Blacks closer in advancing civil rights.

 - He spent the rest of his life bringing Reform Jews closer to Israel in advancing Zionism.

 - My father had dual citizenship. He advocated a Diaspora Jewish voice in Israeli policies.

- The profound significance of the Holocaust Memorial Center is its power for all people to grasp the moral imperative at the heart of each person. It's an imperative to do right and to be just that my father felt deeply in his soul...
 - That moral imperative is like a river that connects generations and generations of families and those of us who share a culture that defines our identity and illuminates our destiny.

- We are so grateful to the Holocaust Memorial Center Zekelman Family Campus for the many ways the center connects generations to the lasting truth and the lessons of history.
- Thank you again, Rabbi Eli Mayerfeld and the Holocaust Memorial Center, for hosting this event, and for all that you do for the Jewish community, and the community of humanity.