

PRESS RELEASE

- What:** The PROMISE VIGILS – Remembering the First Transport of Women into Auschwitz
- When:** 26 March 2012 – the 70th Anniversary - time to be announced
- Where:** Starting at Panstwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau Oswiecim, Poland, and continuing around the globe.
- Who:** In Memory of the First 999 Women in Auschwitz
- Contact:** Heather Dune Macadam, co-author of *Rena's Promise (the 716th Woman in Auschwitz)*
for UK: 01837 860606, hdune@heatherdune.com
for USA: Sylvia Lanier (*Rena Kornreich's daughter*) sgl1@allmail.net
www.renaspromise.com
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Seventy years ago, on 26TH MARCH 1942, the first transport of Jews arrived in Auschwitz. They were young women between the ages of 16 and 22 and numbered from 1000—1999. However, if you look in the history books, there is hardly any mention of that first transport, nor recognition that the first transport was young women whose internment inaugurated what would be the most despicable death camp in history.

One of those young women, Rena Kornreich (#1716) was on that transport. On March 26th, descendants of Rena Kornreich (who spent almost 3 years in Auschwitz) and the children of other women who survived the first transport plan to gather in Poland and around the world to light candles in memory of those women. Those attending the ceremony in Poland will retrace the steps of those first women in Auschwitz (as related by Rena in her memoir *Rena's Promise*), from the place where the transport arrived in 1942 to the changing area, to Block 5 where they were kept for the night and finally to Block 10, where they were first housed—next to the Block Smeirchi (Block 11).

From that initial event in Poland, The Promise Vigils will spread across the EU to Great Britain, on to the United States and finally to Japan. The Promise Vigils are ecumenical and open to people of all cultures and communities because genocide of any race or culture begins first with women. However, the way to change the world is also through women.

For more information please contact: Heather Dune Macadam and Simon Worrall (UK) 44 01873 860606 hdune@heatherdune.com or contact Sylvia Lanier (USA) sgl1@allmail.net

Shalom.

ORGANIZE YOUR OWN PROMISE VIGIL

If you would like to organize a Promise Vigil please contact Heather Dune Macadam and Sylvia Lanier (Rena Kornreich's daughter). Let us know where you are located and plan to hold your event. We are also interested in what you plan to do and hope to compile photos and footage of this worldwide event. Suggested ideas follow, but there is no set protocol and participants should feel free to make this event their own—educational and inspirational.

IDEAS:

This is history so some historical component may be important to give context to your remembrance ceremony. Rena Kornreich, despite 3 years in the death camps, was committed to a positive message: "I do not hate. To hate is to let Hitler win."

This is an event not only of remembrance but about life and hope. All of the young people gathering to remember these women carry life and hope in them and it is important to celebrate the strength of women, not their victimization. We want to remember these women and honor them and we do that best by celebrating their lives, despite impossible odds.

- Light candles
- Have a moment of silence.
- Write a Poem about strength, hope, a woman who is your role model
- Create a painting or sculpture or drawing that expressed your strength, or the strength of women, as a whole and have the art on display for all to see and appreciate
- Write a song and perform it for your group—singing is a very important part of Jewish tradition and music or singing is a powerful way to express emotions
- Write an Essay: what is the nature of a promise? What does it mean to be a woman?
- Write a short story.
- Readings from *Rena's Promise*. Rena was #1716 and the only woman from the first transport to write about Auschwitz and the three years she spent that camp. There are powerful excerpts from the text about her arrival in camp that can provide historical perspective.
- Create a booklet of writings or a website by students, post your event and thoughts about your event on the Rena's Promise FanBook Facebook page.
- Rena Kornreich Gelissen is on Youtube and along with talking about the first transport she is asked how she feels about her captors. A discussion about her answer "The heart is only so big, so I don't hate..." helps us to put into context how we survive difficulty without being destroyed by it.
- Invite a Holocaust survivor(s) from your community to speak.
- Invite a spiritual leader to talk about the nature of forgiveness, the importance of compassion, and the role of love in our lives.

Finally, let your local community newspapers, TV stations and radio stations know what you are doing for Women's History Month and spread the light.