

Invitational Letter for Gathering at Auschwitz-Birkenau May 4 – 9, 2020

October 1, 2019

Dear Friends,

Frank De Waele Roshi, Rabbi Andrea Cohen-Kiener, Anna and Azzam Talhami and I, warmly invite you to an Interfaith Gathering in Poland, at Auschwitz-Birkenau, **MAY 4-9, 2020**.

This gathering is to remember all those who suffered and died during the Shoah and genocides since then. It is inspired by Ginni's desire to celebrate what would have been her father's 97th birthday and what will be the 75th commemoration of the liberation of the camps. May 5th was the day Ginni's dad, Victor Nathan Stern, chose as his birthday, because it was his liberation day from Buchenwald KZ.

(Please note, this gathering is inspired by, but is NOT a Zen Peacemaker offering.)

We will gather on the grounds of Auschwitz-Birkenau for 5 days. Birkenau is where Ginni's father, extended family of origin and his entire shtetl community from Romania, disembarked the cattle car - knee deep in mud and shit - where they suffered and where all, but Ginni's dad, perished.

Since 2020 will be the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the camps, it feels like an auspicious time to be there to practice the Zen Peacemaker's Three Tenets: Not-Knowing; Bearing Witness; & Action that emerges from Not-Knowing & Bearing Witness.

During this 2020 Auschwitz Gathering, there will be time to share our experiences and reflections in small morning groups and with the whole group in the evenings. There will also be time for those who choose, to do research in the Auschwitz Museum Archives or wander the grounds of the concentration camp in solitude.

Below are the steps needed to register and pay for this Auschwitz Gathering, May 4-9, 2020. Probably wise to read this letter slowly, with a calendar for May 2020 in front of you. Lots of details here. Ginni is available to answer any questions.

Step 1 – Register

*Please copy & past this Registration (page 2) onto an email or Word doc.
Then fill it out and email to Ginni. Thanks!*

If you want to join us:

- please send Ginni an email: ginnistern@hotmail.com
- or call: +1-802-734-6223 (USA east coast)
- or skype: ginnistern

Please Include:

1- Your Name & Gender & age:

2- Your 1st language: English will be the main language for this 2020 Auschwitz Gathering, however, we can have German or Dutch (etc) tour guides if needed, and we will do our best to partner you with someone who can assist you in morning small groups and evening sharing times.

Please let Ginni know **your need** or if you can **offer help with translation**.

3- Name you like to be called (for nametag):

4- Your email address:

5- Your address:

6- Your phone #:

7- Roommate you desire at the Center for Dialogue & Prayer at Auschwitz:

*Please note, the few single rooms are already filled. If you are traveling with family members, as a couple or with friends, I will give priority and do my best to room you together. Please be sure to let me know. There are rooms with 2 beds and rooms with 4-7 beds available.

If you do not specify a roommate, I will arrange a same gender roommate for you.

8- Do you have any special needs? (vegetarian? kosher? physical limitations?)

9- Please write some reflections about why you are interested in joining this gathering at this time in your life. Please include if you lost family members in the Holocaust (or other genocides), if you had family members involved in the Holocaust in another way and if you have attended a Zen Peacemaker BWR@A-B in the past:

10- Are you interested in joining us in Warsaw after Auschwitz & Krakow?

11- Are you interested in joining us in Berlin after Warsaw?

12- Anything else you would like this gathering staff to know?

13- **Emergency Contact:** please include name, phone #, email, and language your contact speaks.

Step 2 – Payment

Fee for the May 2020, Auschwitz Gathering:

US\$860 or 760 € or 3275PLN (Polish Zloty)

This fee includes everything (room, linens, towels, 3 meals a day, transport from Krakow to Auschwitz), from after breakfast Monday, May 4, 2020 through an early continental breakfast Saturday morning, May 9, 2020 before we board our early bus back to Krakow.

There is a bookstore at the Auschwitz Museum, and a Café at the Dialogue Center, where, if you desire, you can purchase, water, coffee and some snacks - Polish-cash money is probably best for these small, optional purchases.

There are 2 ways to pay the registration fee:

Please pay to reserve your place in the Auschwitz Gathering, **MAY 4-9, *2020***

Stefanie Geiler-Czerwonka has graciously offered to manage the finances for this gathering and has set up a special account for our 2020 Auschwitz Gathering.

PayPal-Account:

send payment via your PayPal to Stefanie Geiler-Czerwonka's PayPal account as a **“friend or gift”**

Email: stefanie9.1@gmx.de

* Please add US\$20. transaction fee if transferring from your **bank via PayPal**

* Please add US\$60 transaction fee if transferring from your **credit card via PayPal**

~ OR ~

Bank-Account: WIRE TRANSFER from your bank account to:

Stefanie Geiler-Czerwonka

ING-DiBa AG

IBAN: DE76500105175429216091

BIC: INGDDEFFXXX

* Please add any bank fees to the US\$860 / 760 € gathering fee.

Apparently, different banks charge different fees for money transfers.

* We will let you know if the bank charges are correct once the funds get to Stefanie's account.

* Please note, if you are able to contribute more than the US\$860, we will begin a scholarship fund to assist those who want to join us, but cannot afford the reg fee plus travel & Krakow hotels. Thank you!

** Whether you can easily afford the fee or not, if you would like information about ways to fund your participation or the registration fee for someone else in this 2020 Auschwitz Gathering, by raising a Mala, I am glad to send you guidelines. "Mala Practice" is an empowering way to invite family and community support, and help fund this kind of a spiritual sojourn.

***If you need a receipt for payment, please let Ginni know – I'm happy to email you one (I don't want to bother Stefi with any extra work and I'm happy to do it).

Stefi will forward all payment confirmations via email to me, so I will keep track that way.

Step 3 – Travel

Please arrange your travel to arrive in Krakow between May 1st & 2nd, 2020. This will give you time to explore Krakow and let jet-lag fade before plunging into the intensity of Auschwitz. You are free to stay anywhere in Krakow you desire, but we have a block of discounted rooms reserved in the Wyspianski Hotel (info below). It is recommended to reserve your room at the Wyspianski Hotel as soon as possible.

On **Sunday, May 3, 2020**, there will be an *optional* walking tour of Kazimierz, the Old Jewish Quarter of Krakow. Probably about US\$25 – US\$30 which you can pay that morning at breakfast (*cash only*, not included in your registration fee). This is a very worthwhile day-long tour with local Polish historians – highly recommended.

Return travel:

Please arrange your return travel for AFTER Saturday afternoon, May 9, 2020 if possible.

On, Saturday, May 9th, our chartered bus will depart Auschwitz in the morning and stop at the Airport in Krakow and the main Krakow train station (included).

If you have to take a taxi to the airport because our bus won't get you there in time for your flight, the taxi cost is on your own.

For those staying 2 more (optional) nights in Krakow and continuing on to Warsaw with us on **Monday, May 11, 2020**, we will return to the **Krakow Wyspianski Hotel** and you can arrange your return or onward travel from Warsaw.

Details about the optional Warsaw 2-3 day trip below.

In addition, I suspect several of us will travel from Warsaw to Berlin around May 13th or 14th, 2020 - this in the very early stages of planning and might include the option of a Berlin Street Retreat.

Passports:

Please be sure your passport expiration date is at least 6 months AFTER YOUR RETURN HOME FLIGHT.

Please make color copies of the 1st page of your passport. Leave a copy with someone at home, put a copy in your luggage, backpack and carry-on, and email a copy to Ginni. This helps things resolve quicker if your passport is lost or stolen.

Your Travel Itinerary:

When your travel tickets are confirmed, please send your travel itinerary to Ginni: ginnistern@hotmail.com

Step 4 - Reserve Hotel In Krakow**Wyspianski Hotel - Krakow**

Westerplatte 15, Krakow, Poland

The first 2 weeks in May 2020 are a national Polish holiday, and all mid-range hotels near the Old Town "Stare Miasto" (a UNESCO Site) were already booked in early 2019!

There are many Hostels for less money & other hotels for more money in the area. If you decide to stay in a Hostel or another hotel, please choose one as close to the **Wyspianski Hotel** as possible and let Ginni know where you'll be staying. All optional activities before and after the Auschwitz Gathering, will meet at the Wyspianski Hotel lobby, and our whole group will be departing for Auschwitz from there, early the morning of **Monday, May 4, 2020**.

Please reserve your Wyspianski Hotel room as soon as possible.
Please email: Anna Rejzerewicz , wyspianski@janpol.com.pl
Phone nbr: +48 12 429 60 28
By March 1, 2020, she will send you a security link for direct payment for your reservation.
Wyspianski Hotel Reduced Group Prices:
99 Euro / US\$109, 1 room, with 2 beds, per night, including breakfast
80 Euro / US\$88, single room, per night, including breakfast
<u>Password necessary for our discounted block reservation:</u>
"European Legacy Tours May 2020"

If you want me to help you find a roommate from our group to share your Wyspianski Hotel room, please let me know: ginnistern@hotmail.com

Our block of rooms at the Wyspianski Hotel are reserved for:

May 1 - 4, 2020 & May 9 -11, 2020

On **March 1, 2020**, any remaining Wyspianski Hotel rooms in our reserved block will be **released**, but you may still contact the Wyspianski Hotel to see if they have any rooms available. The discount will no longer be available after March 1, 2020.

- ~ You may cancel or change your dates for NO CHARGE until April 1, 2020.
- ~ After April 1, 2020, NO REFUND for cancellations or changes.

Travel, meals and hotel before and after the Auschwitz Gathering are on your own. As soon as you suspect you know your dates of travel, please reserve your hotel reservation, with the **Wyspianski Hotel**. And, please send your itinerary to Ginni.

Step 5 – Optional Added Side Trip To Warsaw: **Monday, MAY 11 - MAY 14 or 15, 2020**

After our 2020 Auschwitz Gathering, there will be an optional 3-day side-trip to Warsaw. There we will have a walking tour of the Old Jewish Quarter and tour the Jewish Museum, “POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews” which is a museum on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. During our Warsaw evenings, I will invite Polish friends to come to speak with us about their personal experiences of being Jewish in Poland after the war to present.

Present museum admission: Regular price: 30 PLN Once I know how many want to go to Warsaw, we might qualify for group tickets for reduced admission.

Train from Krakow to Warsaw (approx. 2 hour 30 minute ride), presently costs: 245pln per person (or about US\$65).

We now have a block of rooms reserved for
Monday, May 11 - May 14 or 15, 2020 at:

Ibis Hotel, Warsaw Old Town Please make your own reservations via email.
Email: H3714-RE1@accor.com
Natalia Jaworska, Kierownik Rezerwacji / Reservation Manager
Ul. Muranowska 2, 00-209 Warszawa
Tél.: +48 (22) 310 10 13 - Fax : +48 (22) 310 10 10
360 pln/ 83Euro /US\$90 per double room with breakfast per night
330 pln / 75Euro /US\$83 per single room with breakfast per night

If you have any questions or want to discuss any part of this sojourn, don't hesitate to contact Ginni: ginnistern@hotmail.com or we can arrange a skype date to talk.

My skype: ginnistern

Phone: +1-802-734-6223 this is the phone # I will have in Poland in 2020 for texts or personal FaceBook messaging.

FYI, there are plans slowly taking shape to follow the Warsaw days with a trip to Berlin. It is yet to be scheduled, but will probably be around May 15, 16, 17, 18, 2020. Personally, I am interested in visiting the Jewish Museum in Berlin and Dietrich Bonhoeffer-House: Memorial and Place of Encounter. There is much to see in Berlin! Please let Ginni know your interests.

In Peace,
Frank DeWaele Roshi &
Ginni Myoshin Stern,
Serving the One
September 26, 2019

*"I greet you from the other side of sorrow and despair
with a love so vast and shattered it will reach you everywhere."
~ Leonard Cohen*