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## **Jewish Museum Milwaukee first US venue to host exhibit exploring diary discovered at Auschwitz**

*The Girl in the Diary kicks off U.S. tour in Milwaukee in conjunction with International Holocaust Remembrance Day and 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of end of World War II in 2020*

**MILWAUKEE, WI – Jan. 16, 2020** – The Jewish Museum Milwaukee’s (JMM) next exhibit sheds new light on a diary found in the rubble of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp when it was liberated 75 years ago this month. Organized by the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow, Poland, *The Girl in the Diary: Searching for Rywka from the Lodz Ghetto* will have its U.S. premiere at JMM Jan. 23 – May 17. The exhibit opens just before International Holocaust Remembrance Day (Jan. 27), which commemorates the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.

“As time passes, there are fewer and fewer remaining Holocaust survivors sharing their first-hand accounts of this critically important time in our history,” said Molly Dubin, Jewish Museum Milwaukee curator. “We have to look to artifacts more and more to give a personal voice to this story, and that’s exactly what Rywka’s diary does.”

The exhibit is organized around a 112-page diary written by teenager Rywka Lipszyc (pronounced “Rivka Lipschitz”) in the Lodz Ghetto between October 1943 and April 1944. In 1945 a Soviet doctor found the diary, written in a school notebook, in the rubble of the liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. The book’s pages are the testament of a Jewish girl who lost her siblings and parents, but never lost hope.

More than 60 years after its discovery, the diary traveled to the United States to the Holocaust Center of Northern California where Dr. Anita Friedman and an international research team began the task of trying to locate answers about the notebook and its writer.

Rywka’s diary, a moving memoir of life and adolescence in the Lodz Ghetto, is the starting point for the exhibit. Selected passages are displayed on a large interactive multimedia light table and are supplemented by expert commentary from historians, doctors, psychologists and rabbis. These commentaries provide context of the times and events Rywka refers to in her diary. The historical

and intimate artifacts displayed in the exhibit, including a brooch with a cut-out design of the fence and Jewish quarters sign, a hand carved wooden box made and used in the Lodz Ghetto, and a pair of baby shoes handmade by children in the Lodz Ghetto, serve as witness to the personal dimensions of the Holocaust. The exhibit also includes photographs of people, forced labor and conditions in the Lodz Ghetto, taken by order and clandestinely, projected onto the surrounding walls.

Rywka's story offers a rare female perspective, as the majority of known Holocaust-era diaries were written by young men. The story presented in the exhibit is mainly that of women – the women who fought for survival in the Lodz Ghetto and in concentration camps. It is filled with their pain, longing, fear, daily battles, and their courage. At its heart, it is the story of a journey in search of Rywka and her fate – a story still being written.

“What happened to Rywka at the end of and following the war is still a mystery,” said Dubin. “We’re honored and humbled to be the first museum in the United States to share her story and invite people to experience it for themselves.”

The Museum's programming during the run of the exhibit adds additional context to the subject matter:

- **Opening Preview** – *Thursday, Jan. 23, 7 – 9 p.m.*  
Jacob Nowakowski, director of the Galicia Jewish Museum in Krakow where the exhibit was first created and displayed, discusses its creation and history.
- **Holocaust Diaries: An Intimate View into History** – *Wednesday, Feb. 12, 7 – 8:30 p.m.*  
Rachel Baum, deputy director of the Sam & Helen Stahl Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, explores the importance of Holocaust diaries.
- **The Book of You: Memoir Workshop** – *Sunday, March 8, 12 – 3 p.m.*  
Participants explore what makes a good story for a memoir project as they're guided through a process that sparks creativity and uncovers their inner storyteller.
- **How to Talk with your Kids about the Holocaust** – *Wednesday, April 1, 7 – 8:30 p.m. FREE*  
A practical workshop offers ways for parents to talk to their children about the Holocaust.
- **Ghetto: Invention of Place and History of an Idea** – *Wednesday, April 29, 7 – 8:30 p.m.*  
Author Mitchell Duneier traces the idea of the ghetto from its beginnings in the 16th century, to its revival by the Nazis, to present-day America. Duneier illuminates the significance of this age-old concept and its entanglements with race, poverty and place in America today.
- **Fashion Metropolis Berlin with Uwe Westphal** – *Sunday, May 17, 4 – 5:30 p.m.*  
Author of *Fashion Metropolis Berlin*, Uwe Westphal, brings to life Berlin's fashionable past describing the rise and destruction of the Jewish fashion industry from 1836 – 1939.

A full list of programming and more information on the new exhibit is available at [www.jewishmuseummilwaukee.org](http://www.jewishmuseummilwaukee.org). Major support for the exhibit and related programming comes from Koret Foundation, Bader Philanthropies, Harri Hoffmann Family Foundation and an anonymous individual. The exhibit was developed by the Galicia Jewish Museum of Krakow,

Poland and is part of a limited U.S. tour. Connect with Jewish Museum Milwaukee on Facebook and Instagram @JewishMuseumMilwaukee and on Twitter @JewishMuseumMKE.

### **About the Jewish Museum Milwaukee**

The Jewish Museum Milwaukee is dedicated to preserving and presenting the history of the Jewish people in southeastern Wisconsin and celebrating the continuum of Jewish heritage and culture. The history of American Jews is rooted in thousands of years of searching for freedom and equality. The museum builds bridges between diverse groups of people through shared experiences and uses historical events to look at contemporary topics.

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