

Steven D. Reece

From: Kamil Majchrzak <brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de>
Sent: Tuesday, January 22, 2019 10:39
To: sdreece@matzevah.org
Cc: 'Yehoshua Ellis'
Subject: AW: Introduction

Dear Steve,

Thanks! I will try to call you tomorrow, Wednesday between 12:00 to 13:30 or 15:30 18:30 European time.

The brochure is very interesting and motivated me to something I like to share below.

But first @Yehoshua, I like to learn what is most important from your point of view? What do you need for your work? Around this needs we should built a program/agenda and content. Just a few ideas after a short look into the brochure send by Steve:

1.) I would like to suggest to prepare an interpellation where we can bring this issue into the parliament and raise awareness for the need to preserve this European heritage after the Shoah, where the culture was destroyed so in this regard we have to rebuilt it and support the communities re-established after 1945. The idea of an interpellation is that we could describe the problem short on 1,5 page (describe the importance of perseverance for European culture heritage but also in the context of a universal obligation of mankind to take care after the civilizational break by the Nazi-Politics during the Shoah, especially in the context of the obligations of *Terezin Declaration* and or *Washington Principles* when it comes to restitution issues of looted art, Judaica stolen from the former communities) and then ask the Federal German government questions like:

How many Jewish cemeteries in Germany are known and in what condition?

What efforts have been undertaken in the last 5 years for restoration abandoned or destroyed cemeteries?

Enlarge it to eastern Europe and ask question on cemeteries in Poland, Ukraine and Belarus. Bring this into the context of our motion to identify the mass graves from the Operation Reinhardt etc.

2.) I talked to Lukasz Baksik, the photographer of <http://www.baksik.com/?cat=1>

He is open to cooperate for an exhibit, but we will have to rise funds to print and frame the pictures because the exhibition was transported many times and needs to be renewed. We also have to include some grant for the transport and insurance to Germany and if possible also some fee for the author Lukasz to support him because he is in a complicated situation while changing his job now. But this is only to your information that we should include thinking on looking for grants when planning the exhibition. Just in case. We haven't plan anything concert concerning a deadline or a date or what form of an event we exactly want to do so I am just informing you about this possibility.

4.) The Touro College Berlin (Prof. Stephan Lehnstaedt) is open to the issues of supporting efforts to preserve the cemeteries and open to organizational cooperation.

3.) I will met on 1.02.2019 Mr. Matan Michael Piotrowski, Director of the Lauder Foundation in Berlin to learn more about what they are doing exactly in Germany and Eastern Europa and if there are any links to the efforts of our office concerning the issues we are working on in the parliament. So this meeting has primarily nothing to do with our exchange on cemeteries but maybe we should take the opportunity and we should ask him about his support? If you agree than I would prepare some question for my chief Brigitte Freihold.

Best
Kamil

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Kamil Majchrzak, LL.M.
Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter

MdB-Büro Brigitte Freihold
Deutscher Bundestag
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin
Telefon: +49 30 227-75042
Fax: +49 30 227-70044
E-Mail: brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de
www.bundestag.de

Von: Steven D. Reece [<mailto:sdreece@matzevah.org>]
Gesendet: Montag, 21. Januar 2019 15:46
An: Kamil Majchrzak <brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de>
Cc: 'Yehoshua Ellis' <jeellis@gmail.com>
Betreff: RE: Introduction

Dear Kamil,

Thank you for sharing with me more about your work and the long-term and short-term educational goals that you are considering.

In the short-term, I agree with Yehoshua in organizing an event in Berlin focused on the plight of Jewish cemeteries in Germany, Poland, or more broadly the European context. Jewish cemeteries are powerful symbols and reminders of the presence of Jewish communities. Caring for these holy sites is a way to engage, raise awareness, educate, and shift perspectives of local. One significant aspect of such work is the linking of Jewish descendant's groups with local communities in the cultural stewardship of Jewish cemeteries.

I have attached a brochure from the 2015 European Jewish Cemeteries Conference held in Vilnius, Lithuania. I do not know if a conference of this type is something in which you are interested or not. I share it with you for you to be familiar with the landscape of addressing the issue of Jewish cemeteries in Europe today. I am working with two groups in Poland, who have organized or wish to organize regional conferences about how Jewish cemeteries factor into reclaiming and preserving the Jewish heritage of the local community. In both instances, these groups wish to become regional educational centers.

Long-term, I am interested in addressing as you do, the grave sites of Jewish victims murdered as a part of Aktion Reinhardt.

I am available to speak with you this week. I have two open time slots daily—US time, between 06:00 (12:00 CET) to 07:30 (13:30 CET), or 09:30 (15:30 CET) and 12:30 (18:30 CET).

I will be in Poland this summer twice. Firstly, I will be in Poland from early June to early July, and secondly, I will be in Poland for about two to three weeks in August. It might be best to consider meeting in Berlin at the end of August or early September. If a meeting is necessary at the end of 2019 or the beginning of 2020, then we will need to find funds to cover a flight to Berlin from Atlanta.

Please let me know your thoughts. I look forward to talking with you shortly about your ideas.

Dear Yehoshua,

If you wish to talk with me, please let me know.

All the best,

Steven



Steven D. Reese

Founder and CEO, The Matzevah Foundation, Inc.

(+1) 404.863.2383

www.matzevah.org



From: Kamil Majchrzak <brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de>

Sent: Friday, January 18, 2019 10:52

To: sdreece@matzevah.org

Cc: 'Yehoshua Ellis' <jeellis@gmail.com>

Subject: AW: Introduction

Dear Steven,

Dear Yehoshua,

Thank you for your friendly and open mail. I am glad to hear from you and about your strong commitment.

I am a lawyer working as assistant in German Bundestag since nearly 10 years. Actually I work for MP Brigitte Freihold from the "Culture and Media Committee" and "Subcommittee on Foreign Culture and Educational Affairs".

Since several years I am demanding a stronger engagement of Federal Government to support complex educational program including memorials of the victims (cleaning and preparation of the burial places, measures to mark the burial places with obelisks, etc., preparation of the memorial ceremony as well as educational measures in connection with the identification of graves of the victims of the "Operation Reinhardt", which are aimed to involve sustainably the local population of the place of remembrance, as well as nationwide and Europe-wide information and educational measures.

Yehoshua suggest we try to organize an event in Berlin on behalf of a stronger focus to the Jewish cemeteries and not identified mass graves particular from the period of Action Reinhardt, an issue which I am strongly like to support and connect this with educational measures. Yehoshua will as I understood precise this idea and then we should look how we can organize it.

We might think about addressing the German foreign ministry by using your and mine experiences and contacts to make a bigger event where also politicians get involved.

I am able to try to put it on the agenda of the Subcommittee and/or also organize an expert hearing on this issue. But this would be a long term target at it would take some months to get a free slot in the Subcommittee. But end of 2019 during the budget debate in Bundestag or beginning of 2020 seems possible so we should decide fast. For this we probably would need a support campaign by letters to the President of the Parliament, officially from Yehoshua and

some other organization like Jewish Congress , JCC or cultural institutions, maybe Lauder. The aim of such hearing in the Subcommittee would be to raise awareness in context of the obligations of the Terezin Declaration by Germany by granting some funds in the budget for the work of the Rabbi Commission for Cemeteries.

I am actually working at work on the issue of restitution of looted art. And have some contacts to the Lauder Foundation in Berlin, Commission for Looted Art in Europe from London/Paris and AMCHA Germany. I mention this because I am also trying to raise awareness of restitution/compensation for Judaica stolen during the Shoah from the former Polish Jewish Communities.

I would like to learn your view on it, if it is at all an issue and it might be an instrument to support rebirth the Jewish life in Poland. The idea

Maybe we should call next week or meet in Berlin if you are around in Europe? ;-)

All the best and a peaceful Shabbat!

oddany
Kamil

Mit freundlichen Grüßen

Kamil Majchrzak, LL.M.
Wissenschaftlicher Mitarbeiter

MdB-Büro Brigitte Freihold
Deutscher Bundestag
Platz der Republik 1
11011 Berlin
Telefon: +49 30 227-75042
Fax: +49 30 227-70044
E-Mail: brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de
www.bundestag.de

Von: Steven D. Reece [<mailto:sdreece@matzevah.org>]

Gesendet: Donnerstag, 17. Januar 2019 17:36

An: 'Yehoshua Ellis' <jeellis@gmail.com>; Kamil Majchrzak <brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de>

Betreff: RE: Introduction

Shalom, my friend, Yehoshua!

Thank you for introducing me to Kamil. I will do whatever I can assist him and the member of the Bundestag for whom he works.

I want to thank you also for your continued friendship and partnership in the work of caring for and restoring Jewish cemeteries, as well as, protecting and commemorating war-time graves in Poland.

Dear Kamil,

Please let me know in what way I might assist you and the member of the Bundestag in your work.

Briefly, I will share something about me and then my work. You may read more about who I am and the work of [The Matzevah Foundation](#) (TMF) in a recent Associated Press [article](#) published last September. I am a candidate for the Ph.D.

and will defend my dissertation in April. My research focus is a case study of TMF and its work in Jewish-Christian dialogue and reconciliation.

I have been working with the Jewish community of Poland since 2005 in caring for Jewish cemeteries. In 2010, along with a group of friends, we established TMF to continue our work with the Jewish community. Since 2012, TMF has worked with about 1,000 volunteers from 13 countries in our Jewish cemetery restoration projects. Last summer, we worked for the first time outside of Poland in Ukraine. Seventy-five percent of these volunteers are local Poles and Ukrainians.

In 2016, we began working with Fundacja Zapominane, and the Rabbinical Commission locate, mark, and commemorate war-time graves of Jewish victims. Also in 2016, we began collaborating with Fundacja Zapomniane, the Rabbinical Commission and Staffordshire University from the UK in a three year, IHRA grant-funded project to study cultural genocide in Jewish cemeteries and Holocaust killing sites. The results of this study will soon be published and also may be of interest to you.

In the end, we are bridge builders and diplomats, who seek, via cultural diplomacy, to link Jewish descendants with local Polish communities. We both share a common goal in shaping public policy by raising awareness of and transforming perspectives about inter-religious, social, and cross-cultural issues such as the Holocaust.

Once again, please let me know how I might assist you. I would be very pleased to speak with you further about this matter at your earliest convenience.

It would be my honor to assist you.

Respectfully,

Steven



Steven D. Reece

Founder and CEO, The Matzevah Foundation, Inc.

(+1) 404.863.2383

www.matzevah.org



From: Yehoshua Ellis <jeellis@gmail.com>

Sent: Thursday, January 17, 2019 10:24

To: brigitte.freihold.ma02@bundestag.de; Steven D. Reece <sdreece@gmail.com>

Subject: Introduction

Kamil and Steve,

Shalom from Poland! I want to introduce Kamil Majchrzak to Steven Reece. Steven has been working for many years to help us restore Jewish cemeteries and protect war graves. Kamil works for a member of the Bundestages and is trying to raise awareness and change policy there regarding similar issues. I thought it might be good if we could arrange for Steven to meet and speak with people in Berlin about your work and your partners here in Poland.

L'shalom,
Yehoshua

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May you grow up to be righteous
May you grow up to be true
May you always do for others
And let others do for you
Bob Dylan

Yehoshua Ellis

Emisariusz Shavei Israel i rabin Katowic

[+48 508 088 483](tel:+48508088483)

www.shavei.org