

MERTHYR COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: STANDING ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

DATE: NOVEMBER 4th 2014

SUBJECT: HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY 2015

PURPOSE: TO INFORM THE SACRE OF HMD 2015

BACKGROUND

Holocaust Memorial Day is an annual event that takes place on January 27th and was established in the UK in 2000. The first HMD was held in January 2001. January 27th marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz- Birkenhau concentration camp by soviet troops in 1945. Holocaust Memorial Day seeks to change the future by learning from and remembering the past. Schools are encouraged to participate in Holocaust Memorial Day in order to remember the victims of the Holocaust and more recent genocides. It provides a framework to explore issues of morality, human reactions, individual experiences, responsibilities and larger questions of the role of governments and democracies. The government, including the Welsh Government, encourages schools and LAs to commemorate this event in some way.

The Holocaust Memorial Day Trust produces materials specific to the theme of Holocaust Memorial Day. ***The theme for 2015 is 'Keep the memory alive'*** by exploring and sharing the powerful stories of survivors in a year that marks two important anniversaries – the 70th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and the 20th anniversary of the Genocide in Srebrenica, Bosnia..

The theme will enable survivors to be at the heart of HMD, sharing their life stories and memories of their experiences of life before the Holocaust and subsequent genocides, as well as opening up the memories of the atrocities and memories of the aftermath as people rebuilt their lives. This theme will encourage us to learn from survivors whilst they are still with us and to consider our responsibilities for using and transmitting those memories.

The theme also challenges us to consider the relationship between history and memory. Memories can be 'inaccurate' when set against historical facts, they are coloured by subjectivities of perceptions at the time, emotions after the events, or simply the passage of time. Historical 'facts' too may not always be easily established. Both are heard and learnt with subjective influences, yet both contribute to our understanding. This theme prompts us to enquire about the nature of memorialisation itself. What does it mean to memorialise the past, and how should we do it?

Memories of survivors and other witnesses

Preserving memories, keeping diaries and passing on memories all represent forms of resistance and ways of preserving the identity of both survivors and those who were murdered. Survivors and witnesses of the Holocaust or subsequent genocides have memories which are first-hand, personal testimonies that can educate us and inform our commemorations. They can share the memories of their lives before genocide, their experiences during it and the process of rebuilding their lives afterwards.

Further information about the theme and free educational resources containing material suitable for primary to post 16 students is available online at <http://education.hmd.org.uk>

RECOMMENDATION

To circulate to schools the information on HMD and reference the website for appropriate resources www.hmd.org.uk