

LIST OF PRESENTATIONS 2016-2017

LEORA TEC

My goal as a speaker is to spark open and inclusive conversations about story, identity and remembrance in the Holocaust context and beyond. I strive to cast a fresh light on these issues and to create an atmosphere where audiences feel welcomed to engage with this challenging history. My wish is that my talks can serve as a jumping off point for respectful dialogue and that audiences will feel empowered to make honest personal connections with these topics and perhaps discover unexpected moments of light in the stories I share. I hope you leave my talks feeling that you've been offered a new perspective and new questions to ask!

1. **THE PERSISTENCE OF MEMORY: WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ALL THE SURVIVORS ARE GONE?**

How will we remember the Holocaust when those who lived through it are gone?... How will we hold on to a multiplicity of stories and avoid the stereotypes that can erase the nuances of individual lives? ... Who is tasked with remembrance and what does it look like?

Through the lens of her experience as the daughter of a Holocaust survivor and scholar, and through her own experiences and connections with Polish scholars and artists who are grappling with this history, Leora

teases out the many ways of answering these questions. Through the stories she tells, and a sense of the poetry of fleeting moments, she addresses both the challenges and the unexpected clarity that can come from embracing the details of a human life, and finds ways to uncover hope, even in the fragments of this shattered history.



2. I'M NOT POLISH: MY DISCOVERY OF IDENTITY

What makes up our identity? What happens when we try to embody seemingly incompatible selves? How do others unexpectedly reveal us to ourselves?

Through this candid, personal and heartfelt talk, Leora takes the audience along on her journey “back” to Lublin, Poland - a city which she didn’t visit until ten years ago, even though generations of her family had lived and died there. By encountering the scenes of her family’s past, and through unexpected friendships, she comes to terms with what it means to be both Polish and Jewish, and discovers ways comprehend her identity and embrace both the pain and the possibilities of her history.



3. READING DRY TEARS: A DAUGHTER’S DISCOVERY OF A MOTHER’S LOST CHILDHOOD

As a child I did not know that my mother was a Holocaust survivor. She did not talk about her experiences for 30 years. When her memoir of passing as a Christian during the Holocaust, in Nazi-occupied Poland, “Dry Tears,” came out, I first read it to find out what her story was. Then I read it again. And again. And each time I got something else out of it.

Come with me on the journey of these re-readings about the 8 year old who was not allowed to go to school because she was Jewish, to the 12 year old who had to pretend to be Catholic to keep her family alive, to the 14 year-old who survived the war and had to begin her life afresh. Her story is one of pain, abandonment, courage and resilience. It is a story that brings up questions of identity and guilt, and what it means to suffer, witness and survive.

4. SURVIVOR, VICTIM AND RESCUER: THE INADEQUACY OF LABELS

What are the unconscious images that come into our minds when we use the words survivor, victim and rescuer? How might those images obscure the truth of these people's lives?

Through vignettes about Janusz Korczak, a teacher struggling to feed the orphans under his care in the ghetto, Nechama Tec a little Jewish girl passing as Catholic, and Tuvia Bielski, the charismatic leader who saved hundreds of Jews in the Belarussian forest, Leora opens up the discussion about what might be lost when we try to sum up whole lives with a single label. She suggests that by broadening definitions we may get a more nuanced picture of the people who endured the pain and suffering of the Holocaust. Perhaps by staying aware of the incompleteness of these definitions, we may gain a more nuanced picture of the people who endured the suffering of the Holocaust, and create space to honor them beyond the labels that we use to describe them.

5. ARE WE MISSED? WHAT IS THERE FOR JEWS IN MODERN DAY POLAND?

In this talk Leora explores the impact of what Poland lost in losing most of its Jewish Population during the Holocaust. Through stories of her own experiences and her complex relationship to Poland as the daughter of a Polish-Jewish Holocaust survivor, she asks what Jews of Polish descent can hope to find in Poland. Her choice to return to Poland brought unexpected connections and discoveries not only about her own family's past, but also about the non-Jewish Poles dedicating their lives to the remembrance of those who were lost. In returning to a country echoing with loss, she asks, what can we discover from those who are still there.



LEORA HOPES THAT ALL TALKS WILL BE FOLLOWED BY A LIVELY Q&A.

As the founder and director of Bridge To Poland (BTP), Leora Tec creates immersive intellectual and cultural travel experiences in Poland that examine the history of the Jews in Poland and how Christian Poles today are commemorating that history. Leora is the daughter of Holocaust survivor and Holocaust scholar Nechama Tec. She views her work as the second generation of her mother's work on rescue and resistance during the Holocaust. (Nechama Tec is the author of the book *Defiance*, which was made into the 2007 film starring Daniel Craig).

Leora is currently working on a book about her Polish identity entitled, *I'm Not Polish: My Discovery of Identity*. She holds a B.A. from Wellesley College and a J.D./LL.M. from Duke University School of Law.



www.bridgetopoland.com

info@bridgetopoland.com

Recent talks:

Boston College Symposium Memory and the Shoah, November, 2014

Jewish Genealogical Society of Greater Boston, December, 2014

Newton Public Library, Newton, MA, January, 2015

Lexington Community Education, Lexington, MA, February, 2015

Holocaust and the Contemporary World, Kraków, April, 2015

Interpret Europe: Sensitive Heritage, Sensitive Interpretation, Kraków, June, 2015

Conference in Memory of Sugihara, Warsaw, June, 2015

Memory-Place-Presence, Brama Grodzka, Lublin, June, 2015

Jewish Arts Collaborative—Hebrew College, Newton, MA, May 2016