

Encounters with former Frankfurt residents and their children in May 2016

by Angelika Rieber

End of May a group of former citizens of Frankfurt and their descendants were invited to the city of Frankfurt, the former home of their parents or grandparents. Since 1980, the city invites former citizens who were persecuted and driven away, because of their ethnicity, religion or political affiliation during the time of National Socialism. This is called the visiting program of Frankfurt. Since 2012, the children of these citizens are included in these invitations. They heard about the former hometown of ancestors through stories of parents and grandparents. The invitation of the city gives them the opportunity to see the sites of the (great)grandparents' childhood and youth, visit the house, the area they lived in, the graves of relatives and former schools.

The Projekt Jüdisches Leben in Frankfurt supports the visitors tracing the history of their families and offers help, does research, organizes contacts with archives or local initiatives and accompanies the visitors to the their parents' or grandparents' place of origin in the state of Hesse. The volunteer staff of the project team work closely with the City of Frankfurt. An important partner for the research work is the Exilarchiv of the German National Library, in whose rooms a get-together between the visitors and the teachers with the students of the participating schools took place. On this evening the visitors could meet the teachers and students of the respective schools and make arrangements for the day of the school visit. The guests were welcomed by Dr. Sylvia Asmus, head of the Exilarchiv of the National Library, Angelika Rieber, chairwoman of the Projekt Jüdisches Leben in Frankfurt, and Christoph Stillemunke, Ministerialrat of the Hessian Ministry of Education. The audience was especially captivated by his moving speech about the responsibility of German people today.

This year 13 schools from Frankfurt and the surrounding area participated and 18 school talks took place. The name of the schools participating were the Anna-Schmidt-Schule, the Anne Frank School, the Bettinaschule, the Ernst-Reuter school II, the Friedrich Dessauer Gymnasium, Heinrich von Gagern-Gymnasium, the Helene Lange Schule, Carl-Schurz - Schule, the Liebigschule, the I. E. Lichtigfeld-Schule, the Schillerschule, the Wöhlerschule and the Nell-Breuning Schule in Rödermark.