

In Kooperation mit: Stadt Frankfurt, Hessisches Kultusministerium, Staatliches Schulamt Frankfurt

PRESS RELEASE

Meeting with the descendants of persecuted former Frankfurt residents

On June 27, a group of descendants of former Frankfurt citizens will once again come to Frankfurt as guests of the city.

Since 1980, the city has invited former citizens who were persecuted and expelled during the National Socialist era because of their origin, religion or political views to stay. Since 2012, their children have also been invited. These "second witnesses" know the former town of origin of their ancestors mainly from stories told by their parents and grandparents. The city's invitation now gives them the opportunity to visit the sites of their (grand)parents' childhood and youth: the house, the living environment, the former schools or places of work, and the graves of relatives. Some visitors have grown up with the silence of their parents and through their visit they try to gain a relationship with the homeland of their ancestors.

The association Projekt Jüdisches Leben in Frankfurt supports this search for traces as a cooperation partner of the city, does research, arranges contacts to archives and to local initiatives in the places of origin of parents or grandparents outside Frankfurt and accompanies the guests.

Liza Robbins' family survived in Shanghai and returned temporarily to Frankfurt at the end of the 1940s, to Kantstraße, where they had previously lived. Helga Irsch-Breuer now lives there, researching the history of the house's residents and looking forward to meeting the descendant of the Lorey family. Karen Rubinstein will speak at the Friedrich Dessauer Gymnasium. In Höchst and in Kelsterbach, she will follow in the footsteps of her ancestors, who once ran the Adler textile house in Höchst and the Adler textile house in Kelsterbach. Part of the family fled to the United States via the Soviet Union and Japan.

Renee Halberg is intensively studying the history of her family, which originally came from Galicia. And the two sons of Nora Bergmann, who was able to flee Germany on a Kindertransport, learned only a few days ago through research by members of the project that their maternal great-grandparents were still able to flee Fürth and that their great-uncle Jean Mandel was one of the driving and leading forces in the reestablishment of the Jewish Community of Fürth, to hint at just a few of the moving family stories.

A special focus of the work of the project Jewish Life in Frankfurt is the preparation of conversations at schools. Many visitors take the opportunity to visit a school class and appreciate the conversations with the young people. The conversations focus not only on the lives of family members during the Nazi era in Frankfurt, but also on their flight from Germany, their experiences in their new homeland, the fate of relatives, their parents' relationship to their old homeland or their own connection to Frankfurt, or the significance of the visit for understanding their own biography.

The approach via biographical experiences makes the reality of National Socialist rule particularly clear for students. Talking about the memories of their ancestors and their life in Frankfurt before 1933 also makes it possible not to reduce the teaching of the topic of "Judaism" in school to the Shoah alone, but also to give the students an understanding of Jewish life before and after the Holocaust.

The guests of the city meet a multicultural student body that finds numerous points of connection to its own family history with the life and family stories of the children of emigrants, whether their own migration experiences or those passed on by their families. This form of conveying Jewish history through encounters contributes significantly to the dismantling of stereotypes and prejudices, an important prerequisite for accepting the memory of the Shoa as a common task.

The interest of the schools in the encounters with the descendants of former Frankfurt residents is great, according to the chairwoman of the association Projekt Jüdisches Leben in Frankfurt, Angelika Rieber. The following schools will participate - in some cases with several classes - in the discussions with the visitors: Adorno-Gymnasium, Carl-Schurz-Schule, Elisabethenschule, Friedrich Dessauer-Gymnasium, Gagern-Gymnasium, Georg-August-Zinn-Schule, Heinrich von Kleist-Schule in Eschborn and the IGS Riedberg/Kalbach.

The volunteers of the project group who organize and accompany these encounters work closely with the city of Frankfurt in preparing them. For the second day of the visit week, the association has invited guests from the city as well as representatives from schools and initiatives to an event. The purpose of this afternoon is to get to know each other and to prepare the talks with the students.

All participants are looking forward to interesting and moving encounters.