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USC Shoah Foundation and Leading Holocaust Museums to Premiere and Exhibit Award-Winning Virtual Reality Film 'The Last Goodbye'

A pioneering moment for Holocaust education, the world's first virtual reality film to take audiences through a concentration camp, launches as immersive experience at four museums in New York, California, Illinois and Florida for limited-engagement exhibit

September 5, 2018 [St. Petersburg, FL] -- USC Shoah Foundation-The Institute for Visual History and Education (USC Shoah Foundation) announces the museum premiere of its award-winning virtual reality film, *The Last Goodbye*, at four leading Holocaust museums on September 16, 2018. The Florida Holocaust Museum, Illinois Holocaust Museum, Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust, and New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust will offer audiences their first opportunity to take a virtual reality tour through a concentration camp.

The Last Goodbye features survivor Pinchas Gutter's visit to the site of the Nazi death camp Majdanek in Poland. Gutter is the only member of his family of four to have survived the Holocaust. The precedent-setting, fully immersive experience enables viewers to virtually visit the site with Gutter as he travels in life-sized projections through the railway car, gas chamber, shower room and barracks of Majdanek seven decades later.

"We believe this new technology will enhance Holocaust learning in a world where fewer and fewer Survivors still live to share their authentic experiences," said **Elizabeth Gelman, Executive Director of The Florida Holocaust Museum**. "For over 27 years, the educational philosophy of The FHM has centered on teaching about the Holocaust, worldwide genocide, and human rights issues through individual stories. Our goal is to connect one person to one person, bringing the focus away from incomprehensible numbers and to the actual people who were affected. The immersive experience of *The Last Goodbye* is a gamechanger for Holocaust education."

First screened at the 2017 Tribeca Film Festival, the 17-minute film is exhibited within an installation created by David Korins, the renowned designer of Broadway hits *Hamilton* and *Dear Evan Hansen*. *The Last Goodbye* has achieved critical acclaim and received numerous prestigious awards, including two Webby Awards and the 'Creative Arts Award, VR - Documentary Jury Prize at the 2018 Lumiere Awards.

This presentation of *The Last Goodbye* is made possible through the strong partnership of North America's leading Holocaust museums. Visitors to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles,

and St. Petersburg are discovering how emerging technologies can help us explore, study, and preserve evidence of the past.

"Every generation needs to bear witness to these atrocities, but our tools for learning and preservation change. We felt that producing the first Holocaust survivor testimony in roomscale VR would engage audiences in understanding the nature of the Nazi concentration camp system where the SS authorities could murder targeted groups," said **USC Shoah Foundation Finci-Viterbi Executive Director Stephen Smith**, who is also one of the film's producers. "The ramifications of such human behavior continue today, and one way to counter that devolution is to understand it by gazing an unflinching eye upon it."

"Our ambition has been to create an entirely new grammar for what's possible within a narrative and room scale mix, in a documentary format," said **MPC's Head of Immersive and one of the film's producers, Tim Dillon**. "Through VR we have a fresh way of capturing these truths. We can give viewers the opportunity to explore the space side by side with Pinchas in order to truly understand what this experience was like. It is a powerful way of understanding and emotionally connecting to history."

Capturing Gutter's testimony on-site and ensuring it was incorporated into the film was itself a feat of innovation. Thousands of photos were stitched together by an expert at the MPC (Moving Picture Company) to create three-dimensional images of the interiors to scale. Gutter's video testimony, taken in the same spaces, was then incorporated into the film, providing a vivid environment in which he recounts his heartbreaking story of suffering, loss and survival. It stands as a testament to the strength of the human heart and the enduring power of hope and perseverance.

"The Last Goodbye" includes Testimony by PINCHAS GUTTER, Created by GABO ARORA & ARI PALITZ, Produced by STEPHEN D. SMITH, Co-Produced by USC SHOAH FOUNDATION, HERE BE DRAGONS, MPC VR and OTOY, Producers TIM DILLON, JONATHAN DOTAN, PATRICK MILLING-SMITH, SAMANTHA STORR, CHRIS MILK, Original Soundtrack by Dražen Bošnjak of Q Department, Edited by JENNIFER TIEXERA, Installation Experience by DAVID KORINS, and Executive Producers KATHY and RICHARD LEVENTHAL.

For more information on *The Last Goodbye*, please visit: <https://sfi.usc.edu/lastgoodbye>

The Florida Holocaust Museum is located at 55 5th Street S, St. Petersburg, FL 33701.

Additional Quotes

"Continuing our commitment to use cutting edge technology to tell Holocaust Survivor stories in an engaging and compelling way, we are thrilled to debut *The Last Goodbye* in the Midwest. Learning about the personal story of Pinchas Gutter-his loss, courage, and ultimately his belief in humanity-brings the history and lessons of the Holocaust alive in a way that creates a connection between the viewer and the past and leaves an indelible mark on those who experience it," said **Susan Abrams, Illinois Holocaust Museum CEO**. The Museum honors the Survivors and victims of the Holocaust and transforms history into current, relevant, and universal lessons in humanity. Through world-

class exhibitions and programs, the Museum inspires its visitors and provides a universal wake-up call to action: Take history to heart. Take a stand for humanity. Visit us today: ilholocaustmuseum.org.

"We rely heavily on survivor oral testimonies in teaching Holocaust history throughout our galleries," said **Beth Kean, Executive Director of Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust**. "Now our visitors' experience will be further enhanced by the opportunity to virtually accompany Pinchas Gutter on his journey through Majdanek and be confronted with the remains of a concentration camp. The Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust is the first survivor-founded Holocaust museum in the United States and welcomes visitors from across the world." Visit us today: lamoht.org.

"Evidence of personal experience is often what 'gets through' to Museum visitors-communicating historical content while allowing people to make human connections," said **Michael S. Glickman, President & CEO, Museum of Jewish Heritage - A Living Memorial to the Holocaust**. "Testimony is prominently featured here at New York's Holocaust memorial museum. When a Holocaust Survivor tells his story, he re-asserts the humanity and dignity that the Nazis attempted to destroy. It is an act of resistance." Visit us today: mjhny.org.

About USC Shoah Foundation

USC Shoah Foundation - The Institute for Visual History and Educations develops empathy, understanding and respect through testimony, using its Visual History Archive of more than 55,000 video testimonies, award-winning IWitness education program, and Center for Advanced Genocide Research. USC Shoah Foundation's interactive programming, research, and materials are accessed in museums and universities, cited by government leaders and NGOs, and taught in classrooms around the world. Now in its third decade, USC Shoah Foundation reaches millions of people each year on six continents from its home at the Dornsife College of Letters, Arts and Sciences at the University of Southern California.

About The Florida Holocaust Museum

2017 marked a monumental milestone for The Florida Holocaust Museum (The FHM) as the Museum celebrated its 25th Anniversary. One of the largest Holocaust museums in the country, and one of three nationally accredited Holocaust museums, The FHM honors the memory of millions of men, women and children who suffered or died in the Holocaust. The FHM is dedicated to teaching members of all races and cultures the inherent worth and dignity of human life in order to prevent future genocides. For additional information, please visit www.TheFHM.org.

Photos and credits



A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S FINAL VISIT TO MAJDANEK



THE LAST GOODBYE

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Foundation

MPC VR

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The Florida Holocaust Museum, 55 Fifth Street South, St. Petersburg, FL 33701