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CONSENT CALENDAR

April 26, 2005

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmember Kriss Worthington

Subject: Proclamation: Holocaust Remembrance Day

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Berkeley City Council adopts the Holocaust Remembrance Day proclamation.

BACKGROUND:

On May 6th at 12 noon, 2134 Martin Luther King Jr. Way, at the City Council chambers, we will be honoring two Berkeley Holocaust survivors Dora Apsan Sorell and Ben Sieradzki, along with other Holocaust survivors from the Bay Area on International Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Ben Sieradzki, a retired Berkeley mechanical engineer, sent a letter to the US 84th Infantry's newsletter, seeking the man who took photographs of him and his fellow inmates at the Ahlem labor camp. It turned out to be Vernon Tott from Souix City, Iowa, and over the next decade both men shared a lasting friendship, which took them both to a place they had thought they would never go again, back to Lodz, Poland, and the former site of the labor camp where they first met. Ben Sieradzki's letter and friendship inspired Vernon Tott to contact other survivors, speak at churches, help with a documentary "Angel of Ahlem," and help spark news media interest for the Ahlem survivors.

Dora Aspen Sorell, a retired doctor and professor of rehabilitative medicine who lives in Berkeley, donated her slave-labor compensation from the German government to a Jewish organization aiding Sudanese refugees. Sorell sees many similar parallels of the refugees from the Darfur region of western Sudan to the situation of her and her family under Hitler. She hopes this will raise awareness among other Jews and inspire them to give this money to the Sudan plight. Sorell has spoken at countless events from classrooms and summer camps to museums and prisons about the dangers of hatred and violence, and self-published a book of memoirs entitled, "Tell the Children, Letters to Miriam."

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

NONE

CONTACT PERSON:

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HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY

Let us make this day, a day of remembrance of the Holocaust:

- WHEREAS,** We remember with sadness the millions of victims of the "final solution." We remember with admiration the resisters, known and unknown, who risked and lost their lives to save others. We remember with respect the survivors, who escaped or who were freed, and to this very day, live to contribute so much to our world and our city. We remember today to firmly commit ourselves to say NEVER AGAIN; and
- WHEREAS,** We remember today the eleven million people killed by Nazi genocidal policy. It was the explicit aim of Hitler's regime to create a European world dominated and populated by the "Aryan" race; and
- WHEREAS,** We remember that those believed by Hitler and the Nazis to be enemies of the state, were banished to squalid concentration and death camps. Inside the camps prisoners were forced to wear various colored triangles, each color denoting a different group; and
- WHEREAS,** We remember the millions who died for who they were, how they worshiped, what they believed, and who they loved. Victims included Jews, Gypsies, Poles and other Slavs, people with physical disabilities, Jehovah's Witnesses, lesbians and gays, the dissenting clergy, Communists, Socialists, and other political enemies; and
- WHEREAS,** We remember the African German children, offspring of German mothers and African soldiers, who were forcibly sterilized due to their mixed race heritage; and

WHEREAS, We remember the Holocaust was the state sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by Nazi Germany. The Jewish people were marked for total destruction and over six million Jews were murdered; and

WHEREAS, We remember, to preserve this shared history of anguish, to keep it vivid and real, so that racism, Anti-Semitism, hatred, persecution and prejudice can be combated and contained; and

WHEREAS, We remember the Holocaust survivors who live in Berkeley and the Bay Area that serve as a positive testament to the people who try to revise or deny that the Holocaust ever happened. We remember those who survived immeasurable, atrocious acts, and today are living witnesses for younger generations who may not know their history; and

WHEREAS, We remember this is the 62nd Anniversary of the Warsaw uprising, where the human spirit resisted against great odds. We remember and by memorializing the past we thereby steel ourselves for the challenges of tomorrow.

THEREFORE BE IT HEREBY PROCLAIMED, that we the people of Berkeley will always remember the suffering victims, always remember the courage of the resisters, and always treasure the survivors who are still with us in Berkeley. We join in the worldwide chorus of hope and activism to say never again and to proclaim

MAY 6TH AS HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY IN BERKELEY

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Councilmember Laurie Capitelli

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