

SURVIVORS

A touring play teaching the Holocaust and tolerance

SURVIVORS, an hour-long, educational, and inspiring drama enacts the history of the Holocaust through the eyewitness testimony of ten survivors. A young and diverse cast is our guide on this perilous journey.

*"Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world."
~Nelson Mandela*



WHY THIS PLAY?

The indomitable individuals depicted in SURVIVORS teach history and provide hope, life lessons, and encouragement to speak up and act against today's hatred and bullying.

In an era of great divide with increased incidents of antisemitism, racism, religious hate, hate based on sexual orientation, and hate-fueled violence, we cannot silently stand by and allow selected groups to be singled out and marginalized.

We cannot let hatred become normalized!

We must begin by teaching our children the lessons we have learned from the Holocaust.

Suitable for grades eight through twelve, college and adult audiences, this play about the past is both a warning and a wake-up call for the present and the future.



NEVER FORGET! NEVER AGAIN! NEVER IS NOW!

WHY IS HOLOCAUST EDUCATION IMPORTANT?

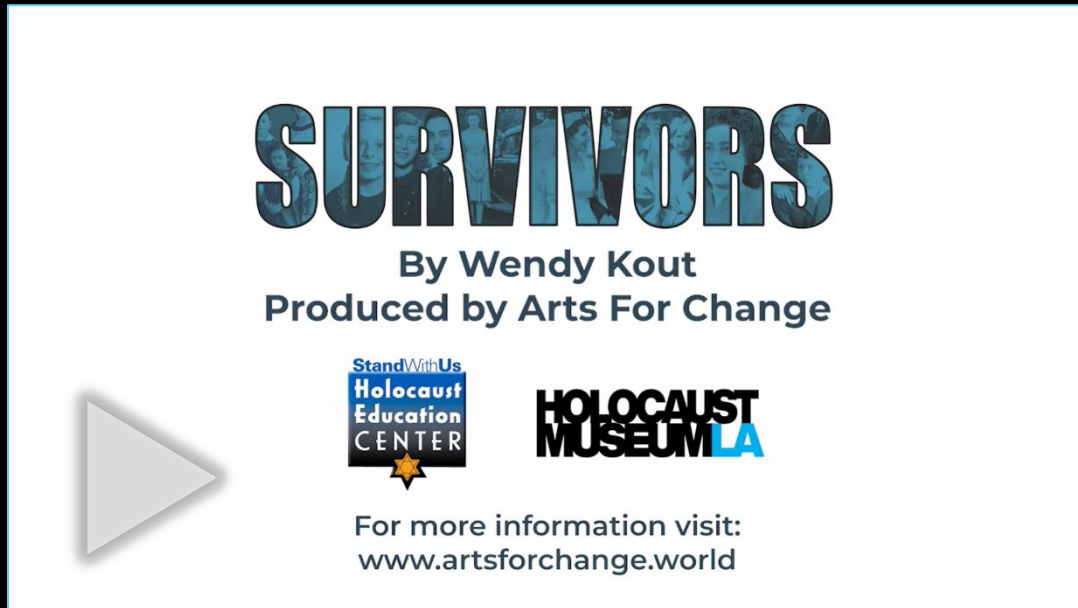
To combat prejudice, we teach our children tolerance. Holocaust history and survivor stories help students identify and understand the dangers and repercussions of prejudice and how to act against it.

We must never forget that between 1939 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered some six million Jews across German-occupied Europe; around two-thirds of Europe's Jewish population. Five million of Hitler's other "undesirables" were also brutally murdered, including people of color, gay people, the mentally and physically challenged, priests, Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Roma and Sinti people.

These eleven million were killed because of antisemitism and hatred for those who were not deemed to be superior Aryans. These atrocities are considered by some to be the worst genocide in history. Others deny that it ever happened.



WATCH THE SURVIVORS TRAILER



PRODUCTION HISTORY

2017 – Playwright Wendy Kout was commissioned by CenterStage Theatre in Rochester, NY to write a Holocaust play, based on the lives of ten survivors who immigrated to Rochester. A month later, while watching Neo-Nazis march with tiki torches in Charlottesville, Wendy realized she wasn't just writing a history play. She was writing a warning play.

2018-2019 – Approximately 10,000 students experienced SURVIVORS throughout Rochester and surrounding areas at 25 private and public schools and at CenterStage Theatre.

2019 – Playwright Wendy Kout was asked by Skylight Theatre Company in Los Angeles to pen a full-length adaptation of SURVIVORS weaving in contemporary conflicts. The resulting iteration of the project, NEVER IS NOW, played to a multi-generational, diverse audience of over 2000 during a limited run.

2022 – Coming out of our Covid hiatus, this past spring SURVIVORS had new productions which toured schools and stages in Philadelphia and Victoria, B.C. Canada.

2023 – SURVIVORS school and stage tours continued in NY, Philadelphia, and Victoria and Vancouver, B.C. Canada. Keshet Chaim/Arts for Change launched the Los Angeles and West Coast school and stage tour of SURVIVORS at Calabasas High School, followed by performances at Adat Ariel Temple and Camp Alonim. The public premiere will be at and presented by the Museum of Tolerance on September 10 followed by another public performance at Ronald Reagan Presidential Library October 15

2024 – SURVIVORS school and stage tours continue in Los Angeles, the West Coast, NY, Philadelphia, Vancouver, Victoria, B.C. Canada and a new production will launch in the Twin Cities, Minnesota.

Jlife

Jlife

"Survivors"

By Elad Mazar
August 2, 2023



The women behind the play from left to right: Genie Benson, Wendy Kout, Evie Abat.

Their Story is Our Hope

"SURVIVORS" is an acclaimed play enacting the eyewitness accounts of 10 Holocaust survivors. A young and diverse cast gives an impressive and emotional performance that won't leave a dry eye in the house. Now, Jewish community leaders want this important play to become part of educational curricula throughout the state.

Growing up in Israel, I saw a lot of plays about the Holocaust. I also attended lectures and meetings with Holocaust survivors, memorial evenings, and regularly visited Yad Vashem.

Outside Israel, one is less likely to encounter this topic. In fact, it's rare to do so outside the Jewish community. In addition, fewer and fewer Holocaust survivors remain alive today. With violence, antisemitism, and hate crimes on the rise all over the globe, the story of the Holocaust and its lessons needs to be told more urgently, especially to the younger generations.

"SURVIVORS" is an excellent play that enacts the eyewitness accounts of ten Holocaust survivors before, during, and after World War II. There are numerous annual national and international productions, and now there is a West Coast touring production with a cast of young and diverse actors.

"SURVIVORS" was written in 2017 by award-winning American writer/producer Wendy Kout, who made her name working on television comedies including "Mork & Mindy" with Robin Williams. Wendy also created the hit ABC series, "Anything But Love," with Jamie Lee Curtis and Richard Lewis, who played Marty Gold, the Jewish romantic lead.

Wendy was commissioned to write the play by CenterStage theater in Rochester, New York. To date, more than 10,000 students and adults have watched the play in theaters and at private events. The Covid-19 pandemic halted its momentum for two years, but with the return to normal, "SURVIVORS" returned to schools and stages in Rochester, NY, Philadelphia, PA and B.C. Canada.



The West Coast tour is produced by Genie Benson and Wendy Kout and their non-profit company, Arts for Change. Genie is the Executive Producer at Tev Events, a full-service production company including galas, conferences and tours for their talented Israeli roster of artists throughout the world. She is also the Executive Director of the Kishit Chain Dance Ensemble which is celebrating 40 years since it was started by Artistic Director, Eytan Avner. Genie told me: "I have known Wendy for years. Although we weren't in touch, I saw posts on Facebook describing the great success of "SURVIVORS." I called her and instead of saying 'hello' and catching up, I began the conversation with, 'Tell me about "SURVIVORS.'"

Genie, the daughter of Holocaust survivors, was determined to bring a new and special production of the play to the West Coast. And so it was **Jewish, Israeli, Asian, and African-American Actors on One Stage** Holocaust plays, despite their importance, can be long and sometimes boring. On the contrary, "SURVIVORS" is sharp and fast-paced. The play, which is only one hour long—written for generation Z, who are used to the bite-sized entertainment of Tik Tok and social media—presents short dialogues and sharp scene changes. The chronological timeline progresses from pre-war democratic Germany, with the publication of Mein Kampf, to Hitler's rise to power, and

The Wrap

THE WRAP

How 2023 Became One of the Biggest Years for Jewish Theater: 'That Lifobland Has Risen'

Alexis of Antisemitism (left) and the American Theater (right) are among the highlights of the year.



In Minneapolis, the Children's Theater Company is staging an adaptation of the animated movie "An American Tail" through June 18. This story centers on the Mouskowitz family, who emigrated from Poland in a 1900s-era play for turn-of-the-century immigration and Jewish-American cinema. And first launched in 2018 by Rochester Jewish Community Center, and based on actual interviews with Holocaust survivors, Wendy Kout's "Survivors" is being done in schools, museums and theaters around the U.S. — plus a film version was recently shot.

The Times of Israel

Inspired by 'Hamilton,' diverse docudrama based on survivor testimony is touring US

In under an hour, 'SURVIVORS' touches on Nazi racial laws, Kristallnacht, and the Kindertransport rescue. 'The survivors in the play are warning us,' says playwright Wendy Kout.

By NAAVA LUDWIG | June 18, 2023



Wendy Kout, author of 'Survivors' (center), with Genie Benson (left) and Evie Abat (right) in their production of the play.

A few days after playwright Wendy Kout was asked to create a play about Holocaust survivors, who spearheaded took to the streets of Charlottesville with their anti-Semitism and anti-Semitism.

"These ill touches it a few under me," Kout told The Times of Israel. "That's what the urgency of this play was fully underscored."

Warning audiences to connect with the Holocaust through eyewitness testimony, Kout wrote "Survivors," a docudrama commissioned by CenterStage of Rochester, New York. Since 2017, the play has toured North America with a new cast for each region.

"The survivors in the play are warning us," said Kout, a veteran TV writer who co-produced the "Survivors" West Coast tour.

In early May, the company performed at Adat Ari El, a progressive Conservative congregation in Los Angeles. The audience of 250 included community leaders and students who'd recently participated in March of the Living.

The West Coast "Survivors" cast, said Kout, is unlike previous casts.



Wendy Kout, author of 'Survivors' (center), with Genie Benson (left) and Evie Abat (right) in their production of the play.

"This is a diverse cast of various backgrounds and various races," said Kout, who was inspired by the Broadway phenomenon "Hamilton."

In just one hour of stage time, Kout's survivors touch on many turning points in the timeline of the Holocaust, including the Nazi racial laws, Kristallnacht, and the Kindertransport rescue. Photographs of those events are projected behind the actors, adding to the play's authenticity.

"We chat history through these personal accounts," said Kout. "This helps people experience history in the most human way, and that is through the heart."

We are in America

Advertisement for the play 'Survivors' featuring a large image of the title in Hebrew 'באמריקה' and 'שורדים' (Survivors). The ad includes text in Hebrew and English, and a small photo of the cast performing on stage.

Hebrew News

A large Hebrew news article titled 'שורדים' (Survivors) and 'הסיפור שלנו' (Our Story). It features a photo of the three women from the play and extensive text in Hebrew discussing the play's impact and the importance of remembering the Holocaust.



THE TEAM

WEST COAST

Wendy Kout (Playwright/Producer)



Wendy Kout is an award-winning writer/producer of stage, film, virtual screen, and television. SURVIVORS was commissioned by CenterStage Theatre of Rochester, New York, and has been touring schools and stages there since 2018.

Recent productions of SURVIVORS toured schools in Philadelphia and Victoria, BC, Canada, and a West Coast tour launched in spring 2023. NEVER IS NOW, an iteration of SURVIVORS, had an acclaimed world premiere at Skylight Theatre Company in Los Angeles, in September 2019 and was also performed at the USC Fisher Museum, and the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles.

Wendy's film credits include Co-Writer and Co-Producer of *Jacob the Baker*, which will be released fall of 2023, and writing award-winning *Dorfman in Love*, starring Elliott Gould, Sara Rue, and Haaz Sleiman. Television credits include Creator and Co-Executive Producer of the Golden Globe and ASCAP award-winning ABC series *Anything but Love*, starring Jamie Lee Curtis and Richard Lewis.

Wendy considers the writing and launching of SURVIVORS to be her greatest responsibility and her greatest honor.

Genie Benson/TEEV (Producer)



Genie Benson is the Executive Producer at TEEV. Founded in 1994, this full-service company produces concerts, conferences, festivals, galas, and live-stream events for organizations, universities, and cultural festivals throughout North America.

Genie has worked on the productions of *Israel 60* at the Kodak Theatre, Save a Child's Heart galas at CSUN and UCLA, all local Los Angeles shows with TEEV artists, and built national tours for TEEV's Israeli artists.

Genie is also the Executive Director of Keshet Chaim Dance Ensemble, an Israeli contemporary dance company that tours the world breaking down barriers of difference through dance.

The child of Holocaust survivors, Sidonia and Lewis Lax, Genie is an unassailable advocate for Holocaust Education and is determined to bring the play SURVIVORS to students everywhere.

THE TEAM

WEST COAST (Continued)

Evie Abat (Director)



Evie Abat is a former doctoral-level psychotherapist turned actor turned writer/director/producer. As an actor, she has been seen on stages around LA in such productions as *Bloodletting* (Playwrights Arena), *Othello* (Griot Theatre), *America Adjacent* (Skylight Theatre), *The Late Wedding* (Son of Semele), *Titus Andronicus* (BoomStick Theater), and the world premiere of *NEVER IS NOW* (Skylight Theatre), which was developed from the personal accounts, included in this production of *SURVIVORS*.

She has also appeared on hit shows, including *The Morning Show* and *Loot*, and in numerous award-winning shorts and features. She made her directorial debut in film last fall with a short she wrote and produced, called *Dad's Gone Wild*, which is currently in post-production, and whose script has made official selection in several diversity script festivals. Her feature-length romcom script has also won and been named an official selection in writing festivals and is currently in pre-production for the Fall.

Evie is proud to be directing the West Coast tour of *SURVIVORS* and thanks Wendy, Genie, Gary, and her actors for their trust and support!

Gary Grossman/Skylight Theatre Company (Consultant)



Gary Grossman is the Producing Artistic Director of Skylight Theatre Company, which is recognized as a “powerhouse of new play development” by the national *Dramatist Magazine*, and as “a leader in play development” by the *Los Angeles Times*.

In just the last five years, two plays originating at Skylight have been performed off-Broadway: *The Wrong Man* (14 New York Award nominations), and *Church & State* (65+ productions nationally).

Gary is proud that Skylight Theatre Company was instrumental in the development of *SURVIVORS* by producing the play’s first staged reading, and in 2019, also producing an iteration of the play titled *NEVER IS NOW*.

THE TEAM EAST COAST

Ralph Meranto/JCC CenterStage (Consultant)



CenterStage is the professional theatre program of the Rochester, NY Jewish Community Center. Producing Artistic Director Ralph Meranto commissioned SURVIVORS from Wendy Kout and has been at the forefront of new play development including Jason Odell Williams' *Church & State* (off-Broadway 2017, OBA Nomination Best New Play), Deb Margolin's *Imaging Madoff*, Wendy Kout's *Naked in Encino*, David Hein/Irene Sankoff's *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*, and Joshua Hershfield's musical RISE about Jewish resistance fighters.

Ralph considers bringing SURVIVORS to school and community groups to be one of the most satisfying experiences of his life.

Presented by



For more information about SURVIVORS contact genie@artsforchange.world

In partnership with:



Credits:

SURVIVORS West

Photographs: Kathrine Kohl

Video Trailer: Tal Yaari, YZ Content

SURVIVORS East

Photographs: *Lou Schneider* courtesy of CenterStage Theatre