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Virtual tours of Auschwitz and Birkenau to be offered to students

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Todd Cohn is the executive director for Southern NCSY, which is launching virtual tours of Auschwitz and Birkenau.

South Florida high school students will have the opportunity to broaden their Holocaust education and virtually tour sites of concentration camps.

The virtual tours of Auschwitz and Birkenau are being launched by the Jewish Student Union of the Boca Raton-based Southern NCSY, which will facilitate them for teens, schools and organizations in its service area from Florida to North Carolina. NCSY is a youth group of the Orthodox Union.

Todd Cohn, Southern NCSY's executive director, said the virtual tours could be launched as soon as next month. Cohn explained their goals.

"This is the closest that most of these students will ever get to Poland, yet alone to Auschwitz or any other important Holocaust landmark.

"That's the beauty of the digital age. We recognize that many of these students will probably never go half way across the world to see these landmarks for themselves so we're bring the experience to them."

Cohn said the virtual tours are "really powerful."

"We want to be on the cutting-edge of innovation of Holocaust education, and this is the platform that is the most innovative and the most cutting-edge," he continued. "It's the most interactive and relevant to the students."

Maya (whose last name could not be disclosed for privacy reasons), a senior at Suncoast High School in Riviera Beach who went on an NSCY The Anne Samson Jerusalem Journey trip to Israel in 2019, praised the organization for the virtual tours.

“I think it’ll be something that so many people could benefit from,” she said. “I went to Hebrew School, and I learned about the Holocaust my whole life. It’s been part of Jewish studies, but I think a virtual walkthrough is a different outlook. It solidifies how real the Holocaust is. It’s obviously something terrible that happened, but it’s real and it’s something that we need to teach and learn about so it never happens again.”

Cohn said that although the organization has had a Holocaust education initiative for a while and has also been doing other innovative things, these efforts have come to forefront since the [2019 revelation of former Spanish River High School principal William Latson’s controversial comments in an email exchange with a parent.](#)

Latson wrote in the email exchange from April 2018, “I can’t say the Holocaust is a factual, historical event because I am not in a position to do so as a school district employee.”

Although Latson was fired from his position, [he was recently rehired by the Palm Beach County School Board.](#) However, [the School Board will reconvene on Nov. 2 to decide whether to move Latson to a new role, or to reverse its decision to rehire him.](#)

Cohn said Latson’s reinstatement has caused the organization to redouble and intensify its Holocaust education efforts.

“We were already running our Holocaust education program, but we’re going to continue expanding our Holocaust education initiative,” he said.

Cohn said the organization’s Holocaust education initiative is a free resource for all private and public schools, as well as Jewish youth groups regardless of denomination or synagogue.

Visit southern.ncsy.org for more information.



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