

# Peace: Piece by Piece

## HOLOCAUST EDUCATION PROGRAM PROPOSAL

GRETA ELBOGEN LCSW

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To whom it may concern,

I am pleased to submit the attached proposal for your institution's Arts and/or Holocaust Education program.

Students at all levels would be invited to create one or more visual art works and/or musical compositions inspired by poems in my book God Plays Hide and Seek.

The student's art work and/or musical composition would be presented as an exhibit and/or performance and would include a reading of my poems.

I believe as a Holocaust survivor, teacher and poet that making my personal story available to a larger audience is valuable in our current unsettling time.

In addition to the proposal, I am attaching my biography, CV, samples of my poems, and a letter of recommendation.

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,  
Greta Elbogen

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## A PROPOSAL FOR AN ARTISTIC EXERCISE FOR A HOLOCAUST EDUCATION PROGRAM

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### **Exhibit Objective:**

Greta Elbogen's poems in her book *God Plays Hide and Seek* speak about her experiences during the Holocaust and her journey towards self-healing. Ms. Elbogen's story is a universal message to empower us and uplift our spirits in a time when we often doubt that happiness in our daily life and Peace in our World is possible. Due to her upbringing deeply rooted in Jewish tradition, with rabbinical background, she was able to connect to the mystical and transformative teachings which is that suffering could be a way to joy and renewal.

As part of either an Art class, History class or Holocaust education requirement, students at all levels are invited to read *God Plays Hide and Seek* and then create one or more visual art works or musical compositions inspired by one or more of Ms. Elbogen's poems.

Following the reading of the book, and in advance of the art assignment, Ms. Elbogen will meet with students in an effort to deepen their understanding of the poems, and, if a student requests, could also be available to engage with students during the art assignment to serve as an artistic collaborator. Through this assignment, each participating student will become witness to a Holocaust survivor's ultimate triumphs she achieved in spite of her early life's traumas.

### **Proposal Objective:**

To find the following for the exhibit:

- To teach students how to express history through the language of art.
- To help students integrate the lyricism of music with the message of poetry.
- To give guidance to young students who are struggling to find meaning in their lives.
- To inspire young students facing hardships to find the tools to transform difficulties into positive action.

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### **Artist Statement:**

The theme of the educational project focuses on Greta's saga, how she finds her way out of deep sadness after experiencing family tragedy during the Holocaust as a young girl. In spite of the misery she endured, Greta found beauty around her and an ability that sustained her throughout her life.

In her poetic language, Greta guides us on how to transform suffering into inner peace and joy, to become more loving and forgiving. Her poetry informs us that to create a peaceful society we need to focus more on self-development, and self-healing. As Greta says "it is our life's purpose to search, to grow."

Greta's writing also highlights the importance of the mother's role in a child's life, and the dramatic consequences of the absence of the mother's care.

*This project has received support and some funding from the Austrian Cultural Forum. The Austrian government and the Austrian Cultural Forum have previously supported Greta's work by translating and publishing her poetry. She was also invited to perform a reading of her poetry, with musical accompaniment, at the Austrian Cultural Forum in 2014..*

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## **Biography:**

Greta Elbogen is a spiritually oriented psychotherapist, educator, inspirational speaker, and poet. Born Grete Fischmann in Vienna, Austria in October of 1937, Greta was the youngest of 4 children. Her father was from Csorna, Hungary, her mother from Frauenkirchen, Austria. Both families were practicing in the Orthodox Jewish tradition. Greta's father, together with his brother, owned a grain business. In 1939 after the annexation of Austria to Germany the family fled to Hungary. In 1943 Greta's father was collected, together with other Jewish men in Budapest, and taken into slave labor. He perished in Dachau in 1945. Many of Greta's family members vanished, never to be seen again.

In 1944, the Germans with the help of the Hungarian Arrow Cross began mass deportations of Budapest Jews. Greta was separated from her mother and older sister and was taken into hiding with her older brothers. They were among more than thousand children rescued by Pastor Gabor Sztelho who had them hidden as Christians. Greta's mother and older sister were saved by the heroic efforts of the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg who distributed thousands of protective papers. They were able to stay in one of the buildings purchased and declared Swedish properties.

In February of 1945 the Russians liberated Budapest. Greta now age 7, survived and found her mother, only to be placed in an orphanage, due to mother's incapacitated condition and their home being in ruins from bombs. She grew up in communist ruled Hungary, married, and moved to the United States with her husband in 1957.

While raising 4 children she completed her education receiving a B.A. from Brooklyn College and a Masters Degree in Social Work from Hunter College in 1977.

Greta began to look for answers early in her life as to why is there so much suffering around her and the cause of it. She has been on a life long journey of self discovery.

Greta's career includes serving needy Holocaust survivors and the Syrian Jewish immigrant population. Her book of poems "*God Plays Hide and Seek*" was published by the Austrian government in 2015. Some of her contributions are; volunteering for the Shoa Visual Foundation 1995-1997, created by Steven Spielberg. Presently she is speaker at The Museum of Jewish Heritage ,N.Y.

**In Greta's words:** *"I see myself as a teacher who is able to help others by understanding my own life experiences. Just as I learned over the years to transform my own suffering into compassion one day at the time, I believe that all of us, if we choose to are able to leave behind the notion of being victims and embrace life, living it to the fullest."*

## CV

### Professional Experience

- **Psychotherapist, Private Practice**, 1990-Present  
Counsels individuals, couples and families, with an emphasis on self-healing
- **New York Association for New Americans (NAYANA)**, 1992-1995  
Worked with Syrian Jewish Immigrants
- **Sephardic Bikur Holim**, 1988-1992  
Served as senior caseworker and fieldwork supervisor for social work students
- **Louise Wise Services**, 1986-1988  
Screened families for adoption
- **Self Help Community Services**, 1978-1985  
Served as caseworker for elderly Holocaust survivors

### Publications

- ***God Plays Hide and Seek***. Elbogen, Greta  
Vienna, Austria, T. Kramer Gesellschaft, 2015
- ***Remember Me***. Elbogen, Greta  
New York: Self Published, 2008. 2nd edition, 2012
- ***Our Memories***. Silten, Gabriele, ed. Shalom  
Greta Elbogen poems, pp. 517-525. Pomona, CA: International Cleveland Child Survivors Group, 2012
- ***Denkt uns Gedichte Zwischenwelt***. Elbogen, Greta  
(5 poems in German translation), 27:1-2 August 2010: 16-17
- ***Remember Us***. Abrams, Judy and Evi Blaikie, eds.  
*A Collection of Memories from Hungarian Hidden Children From the Holocaust*, pp. 76-82. Bloomington, IN: AutorHause, 2009

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### Speaking & Reading Engagements

- **Literary House**, Innsbruck and Vienna, Austria, 2015
- **New Republican Club**, Vienna, Austria, 2015
- **High Schools (3)** in Vienna, Austria, 2015
- **Interfaith Peace Gathering** for Hiroshima & Nagasaki, 2013
- **New Republican Club**, Vienna, Austria, 2011
- **High School** in Burgenland, Austria, 2011

### Holocaust Related Volunteer Work

- Member of the **Speakers Bureau at the Museum of Jewish Heritage** *Delivered presentations in the following places among others, 2009-present:*
  - **Adelphi University**, Regina S. Axelrod, Ph.D., Long Island, NY
  - **Boys Club of New York**, Flushing, Queens, NY
  - **Yeshiva University High School**, New York, NY
  - **Hunter College High School**, New York, NY
  - **The Glenholme School**, Devereux, Connecticut
  - **Church of St. Paul & St. Andrew**, New York, NY*Arranged dialogue between Holocaust and Hiroshima survivors.*
  - **Touro Institute of Human Rights & the Holocaust**, New York, NY
  - **Hunter College**, Undergraduate Jewish Studies Department, New York, NY
  - **Hunter Hillel**, Hunter College. Delivered a series of inspirational speeches to Jewish students on campus. 2012
- Advisor to a **Buddhist Interfaith Monk** in Holocaust and Jewish Studies for his doctoral dissertation, 2011-12
- Trained interviewer for **Shoah Visual History Foundation**. Interviewed 26 Holocaust survivors' experiences, 1995-97

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### Licenses & Professional Associations

- **Licensed** in Clinical Social Work, 2009-Present
- **Certified** in Clinical Social Work, 1977-09

### Awards & Accolades

- **New York City Council** honored Greta Elbogen in 2017 “*for her resiliency, inspiration, and enduring contribution.*” On the occasion of the rededication of Raoul Wallenberg Square, New York
- **New York State Assembly** honored Greta Elbogen in 2017 with a citation acknowledging her as an “*outstanding individual,*” who “*dedicated her career towards the betterment of our society.*”

### Education

- **Training in Systemic Family Therapy**  
Ackerman Institute for Family Therapy, 1992
- **Certification in Social Work Administration**  
Hunter College School of Social Work, 1985
- **Masters degree in Social Work**  
Hunter College School of Social Work, CUNY, 1977
- **Bachelors degree in Sociology, with a Minor in Psychology** Brooklyn College, CUNY, 1975

# I Only Have Time To Love

*by: Greta Elbogen*

You may toss unkind words  
Towards me  
I do not care.  
I only have time to Love.

You may offer guilt  
Or discouragement  
It matters not.  
I only have time to Love.

Have you attempted  
To put me down?  
That is alright with me.  
Love cancels them all.



# Dialogue With a Waterbug

*by: Greta Elbogen*

And said the waterbug to me pleading:

"Please just look at me once without  
Such hate of passion.

Who is bigger after all?!

When humans go astray  
You expect to get direction  
To your destination."

And he continued pleading:

"Please would you just lead me  
Back to my home.  
It is simple courtesy..

After all we both,  
Humans and Insects,  
Are guests in God's house."

I responded:  
"Yes tiny shiny black creature  
You may rest in my space  
For as long as you need.

And the pleading waterbug and I  
Became unlikely roommates after all!



# God Plays Hide and Seek

*by: Greta Elbogen*

Can you recognize me  
My children?  
Look closely.

When you see the Lion  
I am having a masquerade party.

When you look at the Ocean  
I am the playing waves.

When you see a Fly  
I simply trick you  
To recognize me  
In such a tiny outfit.  
They are my different costumes

Dear children.

I have fun  
Playing hide and seek.

Go seek to find me.





THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

CHAIRMAN  
Social Services Committee

COMMITTEES  
Energy  
Health  
Labor  
Insurance

ANDREW HEVESI  
Assemblyman 28<sup>th</sup> District  
Queens County

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to recommend the inclusion of Ms. Greta Elbogen's Holocaust education proposal into your upcoming curriculum.

I had the privilege of meeting Ms. Elbogen at the rededication of Raul Wallenberg Square. As a Holocaust survivor, poet, and educator Greta gave a moving speech to the crowd. Having reviewed her proposal and given her first-hand account experience in one of the world's most tragic events, I feel she is uniquely qualified to develop such a project.

Regardless of the hardships she has faced, Greta has remained positive and found ways to channel those hardships into poetry and art. This valuable lesson and perspective should be shared with students. This is why I respectfully request that you fully evaluate Ms. Elbogen's proposal and strongly urge you to include it in your curriculum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew Hevesi", enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Andrew Hevesi  
Assemblymember A.D 28