

## Robert Tanen outlines U.S. Holocaust Museum's regional mission

By Linda Chase

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Robert Tanen is the Southeast Regional Director of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. Headquartered in Boca Raton, the organization's region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

On Thursday, February 16, 2023 at 7 p.m., the Museum will present the program, ***When Extremist Ideas Are No Longer Considered "Extreme"*** at Florida Atlantic University's Theater in Boca Raton. The event is co-presented by the Arthur and Emalie Gutterman Family Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education at FAU. The program is free and open to the public. Reservations are required. For more information, contact the Museum's Southeast Regional Office at (561) 995-6773 or [southeast@ushmm.org](mailto:southeast@ushmm.org)

Ahead of the presentation, Robert discussed the region's mission.

"The Southeast Regional office serves as a local arm of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, imparting the lessons of the Museum beyond its walls to reach more people. Our office, based in Boca Raton, is focused on three major areas: Awareness and promotion of the Museum's educational initiatives through outreach events, community partnerships and public programs; rescuing the evidence of the Holocaust from survivors and their families so the individual stories can be preserved for posterity and raising significant philanthropic funds from supporters across the Southeast in order to sustain the Museum's mission now and well into the future through the endowment."

"The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum serves as America's national memorial to the victims of the Holocaust. The Museum is dedicated to ensuring the permanence of Holocaust memory, understanding and relevance and inspires leaders and individuals worldwide to confront hatred, prevent genocide and promote human dignity. Our organization believes the lessons of the Holocaust, the dangers of unchecked antisemitism and hate, the dangers of extremism and the fragility of societies, have relevance for all Americans."

Robert expressed his thoughts on the recent dinner titled, "What You Do Matters".

"I am humbled by the generous support from the more than 600 supporters who attended our 30th Anniversary South Florida Dinner. We were especially heartened to have more than three dozen South Florida Holocaust survivors in attendance. During a time of increased antisemitism, Holocaust distortion and denial, raising more than \$1.5 million to support the Museum's mission of Holocaust

remembrance and genocide prevention is critical and demonstrates the region's commitment to preserving this history and its lessons. When I took over as Southeast Regional Director in the summer of 2017, our major annual event was a South Florida Luncheon. While we drew large crowds for our luncheon, we were not reaching much of the business community, grandchildren of survivors and young professionals. On the occasion of the Museum's 25th Anniversary year, I transitioned our event from a luncheon to a dinner for the first time in January 2018 to expand our audience reach. Fortunately, it turned out to be the right decision and our event truly became multi-generational. That year, we raised more than \$1 million for the first time ever."

Robert shared the importance of partnering with other Holocaust organizations.

"This is the Museum's 30th Anniversary year and our focus is on partnerships. Local, national and international partners are a vital key to the Museum's outreach and, in turn, its success in ensuring that the lessons of the Holocaust are learned and disseminated. At the 30th Anniversary South Florida Dinner, we highlighted some of those local partnerships with the School District of Palm Beach County Holocaust Studies Program Planner and the Arthur and Emalie Gutterman Family Center for Holocaust and Human Rights Education at Florida Atlantic University."

Robert explained what is meant by the quote "Never stop asking why."

"By its very nature, the study of Holocaust history piques a rhetorical question: Why did the Holocaust happen? The statement 'Never stop asking why,' coined by our institution on the occasion of our 25th Anniversary, urges people from all walks of life to always ask the big questions about Holocaust history and to never become complacent. As the eyewitness generation leaves us, we must never simply accept that the Holocaust was a tragic time in modern history and move on. Its lessons must be learned and applied to our lives and societies today. The Holocaust is not ancient history, its barbarism. Genocidal murder on an industrial scale was created and implemented in the modern world in an enlightened European society. We must always question how this was possible and we must never stop asking why this happened."