



EMBRACING THE PAST

ENSURING THE FUTURE

Since its founding in 1988, the March of the Living (MOL) has become the world's preeminent program aimed at educating the world's youth about the importance of Holocaust remembrance. More than 220,000 people from 52 nations have participated in the March of the Living since its inception in 1988.

The International March of the Living is dedicated to the providing of Holocaust education, primarily but not exclusively, to high school students from around the globe. Toward that goal, we conduct seminars, classes and group activities in conjunction with our partners and constituent organizations (Federations, Zionist youth organizations, Bureaus of Jewish Education, Jewish educational institutions). The March of the Living leaders and students participate in a thorough and comprehensive educational orientation four months prior to the trip.

The training process is then complemented by the participants' journey through time and history in Poland where, in addition to visits to and education about the camps and ghettos, they commemorate Yom Ha'Shoah through the three kilometer march from Auschwitz to Birkenau. The opportunity to see the sites and stand on the very soil as our ancestors, has **a proven success record** of strengthening the commitment to preserve the legacy of the Holocaust, to learn from the lessons of the



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Holocaust and to accept one's social responsibility to use these lessons to help secure a better future for all. This memorable educational experience continues in Israel where participants commemorate Yom HaZikaron and celebrate Yom Ha'Atzmaut and experience Israel with a new understanding of this chapter of our Jewish past and its relevance to our present and future.

On Yom Ha'Atzmaut, the concluding day of the program, a festive and joyous March takes place from Safra Square to the Kotel. The Am Yisrael Chai feelings that pervade the atmosphere remain with the students forever and is a clear indicator of the impact of the program on our young, impressionable participants. Following this glorious March, an outstanding mega-musical event and dinner party is held for all our participants **with an unimaginable display of love for, commitment to and bond with Israel.**



**During the two week life-altering experience,** the international delegations of students march en-masse in Poland to keep alive the memory of the millions of those of our people who perished. They march to proclaim their commitment to the State of Israel. They march to help build a better and safer world so that no people shall again be forced to experience the horror of the Shoah. Once in Israel, their understanding of and commitment to the Jewish future becomes universally reinforced by all participants. Thousands of MOL alumni each year become active "ambassadors" in their own communities and on their campuses in support of Israel.

Our research studies clearly indicate that MOL is empowered to accomplish seismic changes in our participants' attitude toward Israel and their commitment to a Jewish lifestyle. **As a result of participating in the March of the Living, virtually all the students develop a strong connection to their Jewish heritage, are committed to marrying a Jewish spouse and providing their children with a Jewish education. Moreover, Israel becomes an important and meaningful part of their existence with a significant portion of alumni returning to Israel on numerous occasions.**

In the mid-eighties, the founders of the March of the Living designed a program with its main goals of honoring the memory of those who perished in the Shoah, expanding Holocaust education and developing a cadre of alumni around the world to serve as agents for change in combating Holocaust denial on their campuses and in their communities. Little did we recognize that we

possessed the seeds for dramatically impacting Jewish youth regarding their commitment to their Jewish heritage, their Jewish identity and their bond to and love for the State of Israel.

The power is in the process. We, indeed, almost accidentally, created a fabulous formula for achieving the results that are so important. The components of our success are enumerated below:

- Our primary target audience is 16-18 year old Jewish youth. Psychologists and sociologists tell us that at this delicate age, participants are very impressionable and more prone to modifying their behavior and attitudes than when several years older and in a college environment.
- Bringing together youth from diverse Jewish backgrounds from around the world. Approximately 20% of our population comes from a modern Orthodox background. The balance of our participants come from Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist religious affiliation with a healthy dose of students being totally unaffiliated and at great risk regarding their Jewish identity. This unique inter and intra-group blending serves to promote appreciation of "the other" and creates a unique bond to a common goal - Jewish and Israel survival.
- Rigorous educational preparation prior to the program. The program is far more than just a trip.
- The power of combining Auschwitz on Yom Ha'Shoah with Jerusalem on Yom Ha'Atzmaut clearly leaves a lasting impression on virtually all participants.

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**Our commitment is to the “past, present and future” of the Jewish people.** This is, indeed, what the March of the Living is all about. Survivors have always been a key element in our education process. Our students are the “witnesses of the witnesses and pledge to be the voice of the past, in the present, to preserve the future” for the Jewish People, the Jewish Nation and the universal betterment of mankind.