

Approaching Holocaust **Reparations** from a Social Service Perspective: Strategies and Lessons

Lisa Hoffman, Holocaust Services Program Director
Bet Tzedek Legal Services

Heather Klain, Reparations Coordinator
Holocaust Community Services

Why Focus on Reparations?

- Funds can make a significant difference to lower-income survivors
- During COVID, Increased financial, physical, and emotional stress have led survivors to reach out for services
- Receipt of reparations may be a prerequisite for receiving services
- Negotiations with German government yield new or expanded funds every year
 - E.g., Supplemental Hardship Payments, surviving spouse payments, region-specific pensions

Challenges

- Recalling and discussing persecution, lost family, can be difficult/retraumatizing
- Lack of memories due to being young at time of persecution
- Memories compromised by aging or trauma
- Previous applications containing contradictory statements
- Application process is stressful or upsetting
 - Follow-up requests for documents or information cause anxiety, lead some survivors to abandon their claims

How you can help

- Assist with completing the application
- Identify/review previous applications
 - *Confirm eligibility for services*
 - *Avoid/explain contradictions*
 - *Fill gaps in persecution history*
- Limit follow-up requests by assembling a complete application
 - *Familiarize yourself with the program's eligibility requirements*
 - *Supply all necessary documents (and note those that are unavailable)*
 - *Consult the historical record to confirm client's narrative or fill gaps in their story*

Getting technical assistance from Bet Tzedek*

- Holocaust Survivors Justice Network (HSJN) Call-in Hour
 - Q&A conference call, held via GoToMeeting
 - 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month at 10:00 a.m. Pacific Time
- Individual consultation
 - Email Lisa Hoffman – LHoffman@bettzedek.org

**Social services professionals only. We regret that we cannot provide direct assistance to survivors or their families.*

Challenges before the application

- **Influence of post-War experience**
 - Recognizing cultural and historical differences and allowing survivors to tell their stories, as remembered and experienced
 - Whether or not survivor had freedom to speak about their experience, were welcomed into a community, and other experiences impact survivor's testimony experience
- **Feelings related to compensation***
 - Holding space for survivors to express range of emotion related to compensation: ambivalence, anger, comparison to other survivors' reparations, emptiness, guilt, gratitude, etc.
- **Languages**
 - Ensuring information and applications are available to survivors in their native language

How you can help – agency role

- Copy persecution history from previous files, rather than asking survivor to repeat their history for reassessments (same for case transfers)
- PCTI practices for taking a persecution history:
 - *Don't rush or force this conversation*
 - *Take frequent pauses or breaks when needed*
 - *Schedule a larger block of time*
 - *Create space and opportunity to return to this conversation at a later time*
- When recording the persecution history:
 - *Work with survivors to aid in articulating a clear narrative of their experiences*
 - *Ask open-ended questions*
 - *Allow free-flowing recollection rather than sticking to a script or plan*

PANEEM

- PANEEM's facial recognition process has been difficult for survivors and agencies
- Discussion to gather feedback
- Several categories of issues have been identified, e.g.:
 - technical issues
 - barriers to access
 - impact on clients and agencies
 - concerns about privacy
- Opportunities for improvements; combine these as suggestions to CC



Thank you!

Contact Information

Lisa Hoffman
Holocaust Survivors
Bet Tzedek Legal Services
Lhoffman@bettzedek.org

Heather Klain
Holocaust Community Services
Administrative &
Reparations Coordinator
Heather.Klain@CJE.net