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FEATURE

RUTH Brings Holocaust Education to San Diego

by Makayla Hoppe

The San Diego Central Library is home to a new exhibition: RUTH (Remember Us The Holocaust). Inspired by survivor Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax, the exhibit officially opened on Sept. 29, 2026, and features artifacts, first-person testimonies, personal stories and more.

The San Diego Jewish Journal spoke with Founder and Board President Sandra Scheller and Executive Director Moisés Salinas Fleitman, Ph.D., about the exhibit's origins and what they hope it brings to San Diego.

Visit rememberustheholocaust.org to support the museum.



Photos courtesy RUTH (Remember Us The Holocaust.)

SDJJ: When was the organization first founded, and what did the very early years look like?

SS: The early years were all by myself — people telling me that I'd never get this off the ground. By the time that we became a nonprofit, which was in 2024, I knew the importance of it because this didn't belong to me anymore. I knew the importance of giving this to the community of San Diego, and hoping that they would be there to help me make this dream come true of having a permanent Holocaust museum. The first [exhibit] was in South Bay in 2020.

SDJJ: How did you first learn about RUTH, and what led to you becoming Executive Director?

Dr. F: When I was President of ORT University, we worked on a USAID-sponsored program to train the staff of 36 human rights organizations in the border region. As part of that project, I met wonderful people associated with Rotary International who introduced me to Sandra Scheller.

Because the focus of ORT University was nonprofit capacity development, I volunteered to help Sandy professionalize RUTH. Eventually, after 13 years as president of the university, I decided to end my tenure, and Sandy offered me the opportunity to lead RUTH.



Pictured above: Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax.

SDJJ: What are some of the family artifacts that went into the exhibition?

SS: We rotate them so that it gives people a chance to see all of them. But we have an amazing art exhibit that was created by a Holocaust survivor by the name of Maria Jutasi Coleman, and this was her way of talking about the Holocaust through ceramic art pieces — it's very moving, very powerful… Another art exhibition by David Beck Brown is called Essence Portraits; it shows what it would be like for souls to go into the camps.

SDJJ: Can you tell me a little about the permanent location opening at Liberty Station in the coming years?

Dr. F: Memory needs an address. We need a permanent space where the memories of survivors and the lessons of the Holocaust can be preserved, encountered, and have an impact on people at any time.

Liberty Station is the perfect location because it has become one of San Diego's premier destinations for arts and culture. We are grateful to the Arts District at Liberty Station for welcoming us into that community and giving RUTH a permanent home where we can continue and expand our educational impact.

SDJJ: What do you hope this exhibit/museum has brought to San Diego?

Dr. F: We are probably the last generation to have the opportunity to speak directly with living witnesses of one of the greatest human rights tragedies of modern times. The survivor generation is leaving us precisely at a time when the forces that contributed to the Holocaust are once again raising their ugly heads.

We cannot allow the survivors' message to fade. My hope is that RUTH will be a beacon of light: a place where people can learn, remember, and develop the knowledge and courage to confront prejudice and ignorance.

RUTH is not only a project about Holocaust remembrance. It is a project about fighting hatred and antisemitism, promoting critical thinking, and making people aware of the dangers of authoritarianism, discrimination, and manipulation. I believe that message is more relevant today than ever: never again, to anyone, anywhere.

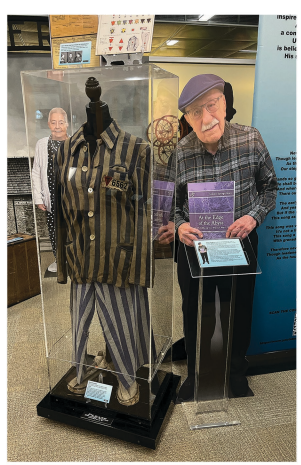
SDJJ: Can you tell me about your mother, Ruth Goldschmiedova Sax?

SS: She had the feel of a pen and a pencil like nobody I've ever seen. She was an incredible artist. She wanted to study to become a fashion costume creator in Paris… Whatever she wanted to do, she did. She was a featured speaker at Comic-Con in 2018. They called her The Superhero Without a Cape because she found a way to communicate with young kids about the Holocaust. She always had a dream come true.

Dr. F: It takes a village to raise a child, but it takes a community to build a place where "Never Again" will be more than a promise.

We need all of you to help make this a reality. We invite you to support RUTH by visiting our final temporary exhibit at the San Diego Central Library, by continuing to donate artifacts and historical memorabilia, and by providing the financial support needed to build a state-of-the-art museum.

Our goal is to create a place where people of all ages — children, students, adults, families, and educators — can learn from history, reflect on its lessons, and understand that each of us has the ability and responsibility to make a difference. ✡



Pictured above: Simon Spiegelman.