



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1168-2005, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1168

Resolution commemorating the life and achievements of Simon Wiesenthal.

By Council Members Nelson, Brewer, Clarke, Comrie, Fidler, Gennaro, Gentile, Gerson, Jackson, James, Katz, Koppell, Liu, McMahon, Recchia Jr., Rivera, Sanders Jr., Seabrook, Sears, Vallone Jr., Weprin and The Public Advocate (Ms. Gotbaum)

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal, a holocaust survivor who helped track down Nazi war criminals after World War II and who spent most of the later decades of his life fighting anti-Semitism and prejudice against all people, died on September 20, 2005 at the age of 96; and

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal was born Szymon Wiesenthal on December 31, 1908 to Jewish merchants in the Galician town of Buczacz, in what is now the Lvov Oblast section of western Ukraine; and

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal's father was killed in combat during the First World War; and

Whereas, In 1932, Simon Wiesenthal received a degree in engineering from the Technical University of Prague; and

Whereas, In 1936, Simon Wiesenthal married Cyla Mueller, with whom he remained married until her death in 2003; and

Whereas, In 1941, Simon Wiesenthal and his wife were sent by the Nazis to the forced labor camp serving the Ostbahn Works, the repair shop for Lvov's Eastern Railroad; and

Whereas, In 1942, after the Nazi hierarchy decided on the "Final Solution" to the "Jewish problem," which called for total annihilation of the Jewish race, Simon Wiesenthal helped his wife obtain false papers identifying her as Irene Kowalska, a Pole, in order to help her avoid further imprisonment and probable death; and

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal survived imprisonment in five different Nazi death camps during the Nazi's reign of terror, escaping from the Ostbahn camp in October 1943 just before the Germans started killing all of the inmates, and barely escaping death in Janwska when his SS guards retreated with their prisoners from the Soviet Red Army; and

Whereas, In May 1945, Simon Wiesenthal was liberated from the Mauthausen death camp in Austria by American Forces; and

Whereas, After his liberation from the Mauthausen death camp in 1945, Simon Wiesenthal began his lifelong quest to track down Nazi war criminals in order to bring to justice those who were responsible for the deaths of more than six million Jews, including 89 of his relatives; and

Whereas, After his health was sufficiently restored, Simon Wiesenthal began gathering and preparing evidence on the Nazi atrocities for the War Crimes Section of the United States Army, eventually working for the Army's Office of Strategic Services and Counter-Intelligence Corps and heading the Jewish Central Committee of the United States Zone in Austria, a relief and welfare organization; and

Whereas, From 1947 to 1954, Simon Wiesenthal and many volunteers operated the Jewish Historical Center in Linz, Austria, for the purpose of assembling evidence for the future trials of Nazi war criminals; and

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal's pursuit of Nazi war criminals led to the arrest by Israeli agents of Adolf Eichmann in Argentina, a technocrat who, as chief of the Gestapo's Jewish Department, had supervised the implementation of the "Final Solution;" and

Whereas, Encouraged by the arrest of Adolf Eichmann, who was subsequently convicted and executed on May 31, 1961, Simon Wiesenthal reopened the Jewish Documentation Center in Vienna, with the purpose of concentrating exclusively on hunting war criminals; and

Whereas, As a result of Simon Wiesenthal's efforts, approximately 1100 other Nazi war criminals were brought to justice, including Karl Silberbauer, the Nazi Officer who arrested teenager Anne Frank; and

Whereas, Among the many honors bestowed upon Simon Wiesenthal for his work include decorations

from the Austrian and French resistance movements, the Dutch Freedom Medal, the Luxemburg Freedom Medal, the United Nations League for the Help of Refugees Award, the United States Congressional Gold Medal and the French Legion of Honor; and

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal was also an accomplished writer having published “The Murderers Among Us” in 1967, “The Sunflower” in 1969 and “Sails of Hope” in 1973; and

Whereas, Simon Wiesenthal lived his life with the belief that “there is no freedom without justice,” a belief that led him to fight against racism and prejudice on behalf of all people; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York commemorates the life and achievements of Simon Wiesenthal.

LS#3486

RA

9/23/2005

<h:/word/resolutions/nelson/ls#3486>