4 May 2025

Poster presentation at the "Space to Remember"

Choir	**"No longer slaves"** *by Jonathan Helser and Joel Case*
Welcome	**Uta and Halina Kühl** *Daughter and granddaughter of political prisoner Hermann Kühl*
Speech	**Jean Mathia** *Great-nephew of Alsatian prisoner Emile Matter*
Speech	**Michael Raveh** *Son of German-Jewish prisoner Karla Raveh*
Choir	**"Stand up"** *by Cynthia Erivo*
Choir	**"Peace be unto you"** *by Hans Christian Jochimsen*

Musical accompaniment by the **Medical Voices Gospel Choir** .

Uta Kühl

[Choir]

Dear guests, dear friends of the Space to Remember, dear employees of the Foundation of Hamburg Memorials and Learning Centres Commemorating the Victims of Nazi Crimes, dear students from Hamburg University of Fine Arts – Lotta, Lilly, Jonas, Bela, and Greta – dear volunteers at the Neuengamme Memorial – Philipp, Uliana, and Gabriel – dear contributors and supporters of the Space to Remember, and most especially, dear relatives. Welcome!

I am very impressed and grateful that we once again have guests here from war-torn Ukraine. Welcome!

A warm welcome also to Karin van Steeg and Pieter Dekker from the Netherlands. Karin is our tireless ambassador for the Space to Remember in the Netherlands, and especially in Putten. She is always available to speak with relatives there, and she shows a great deal of creativity, empathy, and engagement when helping them design posters for their deported family members. Pieter organizes trips for relatives to attend the ceremonies at the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial and the printing events at the Space to Remember. Karin and Pieter's work has made an enormous contribution to turning the Space to Remember into a memorial full of life, communion, and meaning.

I am impressed and grateful that so many relatives and representatives of the associations from the Netherlands, France, Spain, Poland, Ukraine, and Germany have come together to attend and support the event today. Welcome to all of you! Greetings also to the supporting associations from Belgium and Denmark who could not be here today.

I would like to express special thanks to the Medical Voices gospel choir, which has already welcomed us so wonderfully with the piece "No Longer Slaves" by Jonathan Helser and Joel Case, and which will continue to provide musical accompaniment today. Medical Voices is the choir of the BG Klinikum Hamburg, better known as the Hamburg-Boberg emergency hospital. The choir usually sings for patients, but today they are singing for us. They are songs of oppression and the desire for freedom in the African-American gospel tradition.

I am Uta Kühl, daughter of the former political prisoner Hermann Kühl. Together with my daughter Halina I have been active in the working group for the Space to Remember from the very start.

The Space to Remember is very important to us and dear to our heart. For those of you who are not yet familiar with the Space to Remember:

The Space to Remember is an active memorial which was developed by the relatives of former prisoners with the support of volunteers and students from Hamburg University of Fine Arts. First and foremost, it is a place of activity. Relatives design posters for their persecuted family members, and the poster motifs are used to make printing plates which are on permanent display in the grounds of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial. In the adjacent printing workshop, relatives and visitors to the Memorial can use the plates to print posters that are then presented online on our website and here on the poster wall.

The Space to Remember makes it possible for us to highlight our family members in the huge, anonymous crowd of former prisoners. We can tell the stories of our fathers and grandfathers and commemorate them right here on the site where they suffered inhumane injustice. We want to make this possible for all relatives who desire to do so. We would like to be part of the memory, we want to have a say in it and participate in it. Eighty years after the liberation of the concentration camps, the National Socialist period seems to be in the distant past for many people. But for us as relatives, the events and their repercussions are not distant at all. They are very present and must not be relativised or forgotten.

Before his death in 1983, my father wrote a line in a letter which I think of very often these days. I quote: "It can start again at any time, and we don't know where it will come from or who will start it."

Thirty relatives designed new posters this year. The Space to Remember continues to grow. This form of remembering and keeping memory alive is also an expression of common ground, an expression of solidarity and respect towards all those who were imprisoned here in Neuengamme or one of its satellite camps. This is very, very gratifying. Unfortunately, our working group has no means of its own to run and expand the Space to Remember. It embarrasses us to have to ask relatives to pay for their own printing plates if they can. If anyone in the audience today would like to support the Space to Remember through a donation, or would perhaps even like to sponsor a printing plate, you can find the details of our donation account on our website, ort-der-verbundenheit.org, or on our flyer by the door.

Halina Kühl

I now have the pleasure of welcoming Jean Mathia.

Jean Mathia is the great-nephew of Emile Matter. The poster he designed for his great-uncle also represents the group of 42 officers from Alsace who were deported together to Neuengamme concentration camp, one of whom was Emile Matter. Thank you, Monsieur Mathia, for telling us about this today.

Jean Mathia

Ladies and gentlemen, dear officials, and above all, the dear Wetterwald and Nussbaum families,

On this 80th anniversary of the liberation of Neuengamme concentration camp, it is a special honour for me to represent the 22 Alsatian reserve officers who were forcibly recruited by the Waffen-SS and then died after being interned and deported to Neuengamme and its satellite camps. Another 20 officers were amongst the survivors, including Charles Wetterwald, whose son, Philippe, I am pleased to welcome here today. They were liberated from the satellite camps by Allied British and American troops, but their imprisonment marked them for the rest of their lives.

My name is Jean Mathia, and I come from the same village as Emile Matter. As his great-nephew, I am aware that I am also the last representative of Emile Matter's family who is still able to bear witness, which is an honour for me. From my earliest childhood on our farm, I grew up with the ever-present memory of Emile, who had worked on the farm with my father and mother. Thank you to the Neuengamme Memorial for inviting us here and giving me the opportunity to bring Emile back to life on this special day of remembrance.

When Emile was forcibly recruited, our family had already been hit especially hard by the death of Uncle René, who had been forcibly recruited at the age of 18 by the Sturmregiment 195 and died in June 1944 at the age of 20 on the Russian steppe. Emile's death in 1945 was just as dramatic an event and left a lasting impression on the post-war years. But in the poisoned atmosphere of Alsace in the years following the forced annexation, a leaden cloak of silence fell over the topic of forced recruitment, and the maxim of 'let's not talk about that anymore' became a dogma.

In the period that followed, the 130,000 men who were forcibly recruited and the 42,000 missing were the focus of institutional activities largely to assert their rights, and it was only much later, in the 1980s, that the 42 officers were rescued from oblivion with the publication of book "There Were 42 of Us".

On 24 September 1937, our whole family was justifiably proud of Emile's admission to the Saint Cyr military school, all the more so since he had been born a German on 26 June 1916 in Alsace-Lorraine, the 'Reichsland' that had been annexed after 1870 as a result of the Treaty of Frankfurt. The plume from his military cap, which the family has entrusted to the museum in Phalsbourg, is

a lasting testament to his unwavering attachment to the French army, which he would never betray.

Emile did not complete his officer training at the military school because he was called up in September 1939 to join the 174th Fortress Infantry Machine Gun Regiment and fight on the Maginot Line, particularly in June 1940 in the Bataille des Lacs Mosellans and the retreat to Mont Donon. This was the last, fleeting French victory. Emile was captured as a prisoner of war, but since he had been born in Alsace-Lorraine, he was released again.

From 1942, Alsatians and Mosellans were forcibly conscripted into the Wehrmacht, though the reserve officers who had served in the French army benefited from an 'exception clause' and were not affected by the decree issued by Gauleiter Wagner. In view of the looming collapse and considering that he was not bound by the agreements of the Wehrmacht, Himmler decided in 1944 – at Wagner's explicit request – to forcibly conscript all 800 Alsatian reserve officers into the Waffen-SS, and Wagner then boasted of making up for the considerable losses in the Waffen-SS officer corps.

At the end of May 1944, Emile and around 60 of his comrades were called up. While the Allies were landing in Normandy, he passed through the gate of the SS training camp in Sennheim (Cernay). Disregarding the explicit orders and directives of French officers from the 638th Infantry Regiment of French volunteers, and despite the constant danger of deportation, he and his comrades stubbornly refused to wear the black uniform of the Waffen-SS. As a result of this refusal, he was transferred to East Prussia in Germany to prevent him from deserting.

In spite of the threat of collective family punishment, which weighed on the family due to his father's weeks-long internment in the Schirmeck camp, Emile remained loyal to the tricolour. The SS leadership grew tired of these 'obstinate Alsatians' and decided in August 1944 to intern Emile in Neuengamme concentration camp, in the special camp for 'prominent' prisoners, with the express purpose of breaking his will. Despite censorship, the start of his deportation is thoroughly documented in letters exchanged with his sister, Lina.

Then, on 23 November 1944, the day Strasbourg was liberated by the French 2nd Armoured Division, Emile was sentenced to death under Hitler's 'Night and Fog' decree for his stubborn refusal to join the Waffen-SS – like all 42 of the officers. His ordeal began as soon as he was transferred to the deportation camp. His letters dried up from December 1944, leading his family and his fiancée – who had been living in constant dread despite being liberated in November

1944 – to fear the worst. The abuse, the lack of food, and the rampant diseases caused his health to deteriorate very quickly, and by December 1944, Emile weighed only 40 kilograms.

On account of contradictory statements from his comrades, the family was completely uncertain of Emile's fate after the liberation, and their hopes were raised when the Red Cross finally reported that he was in a camp. In reality, however, it was just someone who shared his name. Without conclusive proof of his death, the whole family wanted to believe he would return. It was only much later that they had to accept the terrible truth:

"Emile is dead."

"Emile died of hunger and illness."

"Emile fell for France."

The family and his beloved fiancée, Marguerite, my godmother, would never learn the exact circumstances of his death, and not even the date was confirmed – according to official records, he 'fell for France' on 26 February 1945. I have since learned from the few existing documents from Neuengamme concentration camp that his death was verified: he died on 26 February 1945 in Neuengamme, and the recorded cause of death was enteritis, an inflammation of the intestine. According to statements from deportees, however, causes of death were recorded randomly based on a prepared list. Emile starved – that is the most likely cause of death.

I would like to believe that his sacrifice was not in vain. In view of the refusal of the 42 officers and the impossibility of forcing them to relent, Gauleiter Wagner and the SS gave up pursuing the forced recruitment of the other 800 reserve officers. Emile and his comrades probably saved their lives. The other rank-and-file soldiers would not be so lucky.

Emile does not have an officially marked grave. No one knows where he is buried. His mortal remains probably lie in a mass grave or are scattered somewhere here as ashes, returned to 'dust' with his comrades in suffering.

In the past week, the "Garden of Remembrance for the 42" was ceremonially opened on the site of his forced recruitment. There is a black pine for each deceased officer and a lime tree for each survivor to commemorate their suffering. This 42-are green space is a memorial which we view in the wider sense as an extension of the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial.

Thank you for your attention.

Halina Kühl

Thank you so much, Jean Mathia, for your moving account.

I would now like to welcome Michael Raveh, who is carrying on the remembrance work of his mother, Karla Raveh. Some of you may have had an opportunity to meet the remarkable Karla Raveh. She attended the ceremonies of the anniversary of the liberation here in Neuengamme for many years before passing away in 2017. The poster that Michael Raveh designed for his mother is the first poster that has come to the Space to Remember from Israel. Many Jewish survivors, including survivors of Neuengamme, emigrated there after the liberation in search of security, protection, and peace. We hope that all people in the country can soon live in security and peace. Welcome, Michael Raveh!

Michael Raveh

Dear guests,

Today, eighty years after the liberation of the main camp in Neuengamme and the liberation of my mother, Karla Raveh (née Frenkel), about two weeks earlier from the Salzwedel satellite camp, I have come here to tell you my family story.

I belong to what is referred to as the second generation of Holocaust survivors. Our entire families – both my mother's and my father's – were extinguished in the Holocaust. I feel a duty to share my family's story so that this memory endures and is not forgotten.

I have come from Israel, from Kiryat Tiv'on near Haifa, the place where I was born, the place where my parents rebuilt their lives after arriving in Israel from Lemgo in North Rhine-Westphalia. Both my parents were persecuted during the Second World War and survived.

My mother died eight years ago at the age of ninety. She dedicated her last thirty years to telling the story of her life, especially in the town where she was born, but also here in Neuengamme, and in Israel, and everywhere she was asked to do so. My father died back in 1986 at the age of sixty-one and so was not able to support her for very long as she told her life story.

In 1985, a teacher in Lemgo asked my mother to recount what had happened in Lemgo during the Nazi dictatorship. She willingly sat down and wrote out her story. My father helped my mother and typed up her handwritten account.

About a year later, my mother finished writing the book in which she described the ordeals that she and her family had experienced. It is an authentic book that clearly states what the Jews in Lemgo went through under the Nazi regime until they were deported from the town, and the horror she experienced in the ghettos and concentration camps. Her parents and siblings were murdered in Auschwitz-Birkenau. One grandmother died from the tribulations in Theresienstadt. Her other grandmother survived the Holocaust – the only member of her family to do so besides my mother – thanks to one of the rare prisoner deals with Switzerland.

The book describes my mother's journey through the various the concentration camps until the day of liberation and her experiences shortly after the liberation, the story of her survival. The book was published by the administration of the town of Lemgo. It became a local bestseller, a book that caused a stir in the town where she was born, a book that authentically revealed what

had happened in the town and in the ghettos and concentration camps. She called the book 'Survival'.

The book's success had an impact on the rest of the story. It prompted my mother to become a messenger for Holocaust survivors and to continue to explain what had happened. My mother told her story over and over and repeated the most important events that had affected her.

She told of the changes she experienced with the start of the Nazi dictatorship, when she was an ordinary schoolgirl in a class in Lemgo, and how she became an outsider because she was Jewish. She described how her family experienced growing hardship and misery until they finally lost everything they owned.

She recounted how she was taken from the regular school and forced to attend a Jewish class in Detmold, a nearby city where other Jewish children like her also went to school. She talked about her family who all lived in one house: a grandfather and two grandmothers, her parents and two younger brothers, one of whom was a toddler, and one sister, who was two years older than her, as well as uncles and aunts.

She described how her family was forced from the house and taken to the Jewish ghetto in Theresienstadt on 28 July 1942. She reported on the difficult journey to Theresienstadt and looking after the toddler, how the whole family voluntarily helped to care for the 18-month-old, and how the family was dispersed after they arrived in the ghetto.

She told of the ordeals and deprivations they had to endure in Theresienstadt, where her paternal grandmother died because she was unable to withstand the harsh living conditions. In her book, my mother describes how they survived everyday life in the ghetto, how they tried to help each other, and the great contribution she made to her family's survival under the difficult conditions, when there was almost nothing to eat.

My mother explained how her father gathered everyone together and declared that if they were separated after this suffering and everyone wound up in a different place, they would always meet back in their hometown of Lemgo.

In February 1945, her maternal grandmother managed to leave Theresienstadt on a train to Switzerland. This exchange transport had been arranged through an agreement between the former president of Switzerland Musy and Heinrich Himmler. Himmler hoped the operation would mitigate the punishment he foresaw. Although my great-grandmother survived thanks to this transport and reached Switzerland, she discovered once she was there that almost her entire family had been murdered in the gas chambers.

My mother spoke of how her family was sent to Auschwitz on 16 October 1944 and how she begged to follow them and not be left behind on her own. And, in fact, my mother emerged from the cattle car on 28 October 1944 in Auschwitz-Birkenau. She described in detail the arduous train journey from Theresienstadt to Auschwitz-Birkenau.

When she arrived, it was clear to her that she would never see her family again. It was clear to her that she had come to a place that was hell on Earth, a place from which there was no return.

Luckily, she was selected as being "suitable for labour" so she could keep fighting for her survival. Her difficult journey continued, and a few days later she was deported to Bergen-Belsen, where she had to do various kinds of work while suffering from hunger and gruelling conditions.

From Bergen-Belsen, my mother was sent in December 1944 to Salzwedel, the satellite camp of Neuengamme, where she had to work in a factory that produced ammunition for the army. This was until 14 April 1945, when an American tank appeared at the edge of the camp in Salzwedel and my mother was liberated, though she was in very poor health and nearly starved.

After the liberation, my mother spent another two weeks recuperating in Lüneburg and then made her way from there back to Lemgo. To her dismay, not a single member of her family had survived the inferno, and no one else returned.

At almost the same time that Salzwedel was liberated, all prisoners from the Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, where V2 rockets were built, were sent out of huge underground tunnels on a death march. One of the men was my father, who had been forced to work as a metalworker in the area where the rocket compressors were built.

My father was born in a town named Deblin in Poland. During the Nazi dictatorship, he mostly had to carry out forced labour at the airport near his hometown. His family was deported to the Sobibor extermination camp and murdered in the very first operation. He was left behind with his older brother to work. His brother did not survive, however, and he was left alone in the labour camp.

From Deblin, he was later sent to Czestochowa and then finally deported via Buchenwald to Mittelbau-Dora. It was my father's skill with his hands that kept him alive. The head of the workshop where he was assigned recognized his talent and encouraged him, even though the place itself was hell on Earth.

One day on the death march, all the prisoners were led to a Hitler Youth lodge which was surrounded by Nazi soldiers. My father had the feeling that he could bear no more, that he would

not survive whatever happened next, so he jumped out the window and ran away. He was shot and a bullet entered his foot. He fell and hid.

The next day an American soldier found him, picked him up, and arranged for him to be moved to a field hospital in Hameln. From Hameln he was sent to a hospital in Lemgo for an operation to remove the bullet. My parents first met in Lemgo.

My mother contracted tuberculosis and was sent to recover in Switzerland, where she was reunited with her maternal grandmother. After she returned to Lemgo from her recuperation in Switzerland, my parents were married in the registry office, and they decided to emigrate to Israel.

In 1988, around 9 November, my mother and I were invited to an event in Lemgo to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the November Pogroms. In a special ceremony, my mother was granted the title 'citizen of honour'.

The house she and her family had been forced out of was renovated, and the ground floor was turned into a museum that tells the story of the family. The back part of the house was converted into an atelier, and each year an artist who has received a scholarship can live there and exhibit their works at the end of the year.

The house was named after our family: the Frenkel House. My mother was fortunate enough to have an apartment set up for her there so she could live comfortably in Lemgo and tell her story.

This was the first time I had ever stepped foot on German soil. On the flight to Germany, I carefully read what my mother had written. For the first time, I learned her story in detail.

I was serving in the navy at the time. The trip to Germany took place about a year after I had received my engineering degree. I was serving as a technical officer in an elite unit. I had devoted myself entirely to my work and my private life, but on the trip to Germany a new world opened up for me.

About ten years later, the head of a school asked my mother for permission to have the new comprehensive school in Lemgo named after her, and she naturally agreed. The school is now called the Karla Raveh Comprehensive School, and it has some 1,200 students.

Whenever my mother was in Lemgo, she visited the school, went to the classrooms and told her story. A class exchange was also set up between a school in Israel and the school named after my mother.

My mother also visited Neuengamme almost every year, where she told her story to schoolchildren. After she died, a memorial service was held in the church in Lemgo. In my speech at the time, I promised to continue her work.

We have erected a monument in her honour in Lemgo, in a park near her house where she liked to go for walks. The monument bears the following words:

> "If we were ever torn apart, we would meet again in Lemgo."

These words spoken by her father, my grandfather, were the ones I chose for the poster I designed for my mother for the Space to Remember. It means a great deal to me that the memory of my mother now has a permanent place in the Space to Remember as well.

This shows her attachment to the Neuengamme Concentration Camp Memorial, my deep attachment to her, and also my connection to other relatives of persecuted individuals who, like me, have a heartfelt desire to tell their family's stories of persecution and prevent them from ever being forgotten.

Thank you!

Halina Kühl

Thank you very much, Michael Raveh, for your wonderful speech. Now we will hear again from the Medical Voices choir. Their next song speaks directly to us: when it comes to oppression and racism, we should not simply watch or look away, we should stand up. This is "Stand Up" by Cynthia Erivo.

[Choir]

Meanwhile, we would like to ask all relatives who have designed a poster for a family member this year or in a previous year to come forward. The printing plates based on your designs are lying here on these tables in alphabetical order. We invite you to take the printing plate for your persecuted family member and then stand in a row here so all the plates are visible.
I would now ask all the relatives here at the front to hold up their printing plate and clearly say the name of their persecuted family member one after the other.

[Reading of names]

Thank you! If everyone present could now please rise, we will have a moment of silent commemoration together. Thank you very much!

[Minute of silence]

Thank you all so much! The Medical Voices choir will now sing one final piece for us from Hans Christian Jochimsen. 'Peace be unto you / when you leave this wounded place' – these are the words the choir will leave with us, and this what we wish for you and for all of us. Anyone who would like to can remain here for a while.

[Choir]

Now we would like to hang the posters together. The printed posters are on tables by the entrance. Take your time while hanging the posters and be careful with your clothing – the paste is very difficult to wash out. I will say farewell for now, and I look forward to wrapping up the event with discussions at the poster wall or in the meeting tent. Please feel free to chat with us!

Thank you very much, and enjoy hanging the posters.

Translation/Übersetzung: Jessica Spengler