**PRESS RELEASE—July, 2016**

**Premiere in New York of**

**TAKING THE STAND**

**We Have More to Say**

**True Lessons from Holocaust Survivors**

*By Bernhard Rammerstorfer*

**Premiere of Holocaust Documentary TAKING THE STAND in New York Provides Opportunity to Meet Noted Austrian Holocaust Filmmaker**

**Date and Time: Saturday, July 16, 2016, 3:30-5:30 PM**

**Long Island International Film Expo 2016**

**One of the Top 25 Coolest Film Festivals in the World—*MovieMaker Magazine***

**One of Top 10 Hottest Summer Festivals in the United States—*AUDIENCE AWARDS***

**Location: Bellmore Movies**

**222 Pettit Ave., Bellmore, New York 11710**

**Festival Info:** [**www.longislandfilmexpo.com**](http://www.longislandfilmexpo.com)

**The trailer may be viewed at the following link:** [**https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysg6l2HYLLY**](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ysg6l2HYLLY)

**For more information [including the major TAKING THE STAND lecture tour across the United States in October 2015 at universities, like Harvard and Stanford]**

**and photos available for publication without charge please visit:**

**[www.TakingTheStand.net](http://www.TakingTheStand.net)**

The film festival premiere of **Taking the Stand** follows with a Q&A with award-winning Austrian filmmaker and author **Bernhard Rammerstorfer whose films have been honored worldwide, most recently in Russia.**

**Film Synopsis**

When hatred, prejudice, and bullying threaten again, whose voices will we turn to?

**The voices of the survivors must never be silenced even if they are no longer among us.**

**Nine Holocaust survivors and victims of Nazi tyranny** [Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Sinti, and a political prisoner] from 5 different countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, USA) have ‘taken the stand’ to give their testimony as a legacy for future generations.

**The Survivors**

 **Renée Firestone**, Jewish Auschwitz survivor whose life story was part of Steven Spielberg’s Oscar winning documentary *The Last Days, in* ***Taking the Stand***, remembers:

***“You don’t see the chimney and the fire and the smoke? There go your parents! And when you go through the chimneys,” [the overseer] said, “you will be reunited.”***

***“If I started blaming God, then I was going to excuse men, and this was really done by men, by humanity.”***

***“I looked over and I saw Mengele . . .”***

**Richard Rudolph**, Bible student (one of Jehovah’s Witnesses) and conscientious objector**—**as “A Victim of Double Persecution” he spent almost nineteen years in Nazi camps and German Democratic Republic prisons:

***“The prisoner was manacled with a chain on his back and hung up. We hung on the stake for an hour …“***

**Adolf Burger**, Jewish Auschwitz survivor & counterfeiter in Sachsenhausen concentration camp**—**his memoir became the basis for the Oscar-winning movie *The Counterfeiters:*

***“Every time I went to bed, I thought to myself, ‘You’re a dead man on vacation. You’ll never get out of here.’”***

**Leopold Engleitner**, Bible student (one of Jehovah’s Witnesses) and a conscientious objector, states:

***“I feel victorious. I won. I did not give in.”***

**Hermine Liska**,a target of the Nazi re-education program as a child of Bible Students (Jehovah’s Witnesses) who rejected Nazi ideology:

***“I did not use the greeting “Heil Hitler!” and did not join the Hitler Youth.”***

 ***“You must not plot revenge, because that harms you even more. Vengeful thoughts are the worst you can have; they do you more harm.”***

**Renée Firestone’s** story provides us with an insight into the unimaginable cruelty of the Holocaust within the Auschwitz extermination camp, which overran her and her family like a wave of death. And she provides us an outstanding example of how to overcome such a traumatic past. Despite losing most of her family, she found joy in life and was able to live a successful life.

**Hermine Liska**, beginning as an 8-year-old Aryan child, was forced to undergo Nazi propaganda and the Third Reich’s indoctrination program with the intent of ‘re-educating’ her to become a useful part of the German “Volksgemeinschaft,” which meant following Hitler’s ideology without question. Although taken away from her parents for four years at this young age, Hermine Liska did not give in and faced this fight against the roaring lion, Hitler. In the end, she won this seemingly hopeless fight providing an outstanding example of strong faith, following her conscience, and withstanding peer pressure. Since 1999, Hermine Liska has visited schools all over Austria as a witness of history and told her story to the incredible number of 160,000 students.

Both Renée Firestone and Hermine Liska are outstanding examples of humanity, tolerance and how to peacefully coexist as humans.

Short biographies of these survivors are available below as well as ofother survivors who participated in the project, like Czech **Adolf Burger**, Jewish Auschwitz survivor & counterfeiter in Sachsenhausen concentration camp, Austrian **Leopold Engleitner**, who remained active visiting schools, universities and memorial sites even after turning 107 years old, and German **Richard Rudolph**. Rudolph’s story is outstanding as he was a “Victim of Double Persecution” who was **imprisoned 19 (!) years** by both German dictatorships­­­—the Nazi and Communist Regimes.

Also providing their testimony are **Ernst Blajs, Frieda Horvath**, **Josef Jakubowicz**, and **Simone Liebster**.

**For detailed information please visit website:** [**www.TakingTheStand.net**](http://www.TakingTheStand.net)

***About* TAKING THE STAND *TAKING THE STAND: We Have More to Say*** condenses the insights and experiences of nine victims of the Nazi movement and their messages to the younger generation. They are from five different countries and were persecuted for reasons of ethnicity, politics/ideology, or religion. All in all, they were interned in fifty-four camps or institutions, they were imprisoned for 528 months (44 years), and all together they can provide life experience totaling 806 years and 7 months! The variety of the survivors’ experiences allows not merely a small sliver of the Holocaust to be displayed, but rather the whole spectrum of the Holocaust to be brought into view.For five years, Rammerstorfer collected questions directed to Holocaust survivors that were posed by schoolchildren and students from all over the world. The catalog of questions, unique in the world, consists of 100 questions from 61 schools and universities in 30 countries on 6 continents.

What is truly innovative about this project is that all the Holocaust survivors were asked the same questions. As a result, a point-for-point comparison of their answers is possible.

Those whose voices are heard range from an average housewife and an unskilled laborer to a fashion designer, from those who have been relatively silent to active Holocaust teachers and to survivors who have already been widely featured in the media and whose life stories have even been the subject of Oscar-winning films.

In the book on which the short documentary is based all 900 answers of the survivors are documented.
***TAKING THE STAND*** has already been translated into Russian, and was “highly recommended for use in schools” by the Austrian Ministry of Education.

**Professor Walter Manoschek,** political scientist and filmmaker, University of Vienna, says about ***TAKING THE STAND*:**
“Bernhard Rammerstorfer meticulously checked the historical accuracy of the interviewees’ statements, discussed the answers several times with those concerned, and made additions where necessary. As a result, the book has value as a scientific work.”

**Professor Lorenz Reibling**, Boston College, says about ***TAKING THE STAND*:**"Bernhard Rammerstorfer succeeded in his global research to eliminate the ‘noise’ of individual bias and recollection by systematically ‎distilling a set of relevant transcultural, transreligious and transnational questions of common interest to students of the Holocaust. These standardized interviews clearly revealed how different personality traits, religious and socio-cultural backgrounds of the survivors ‎influenced their life stories and trauma management and in some cases led to a very optimistic interaction with present and future challenges. Rammerstorfer contributed a new scientific and human dimension to our understanding of the Nazi regime and its victims and martyrs."

**About the Author and Filmmaker**

**Bernhard Rammerstorfer is an Austrian author and award winning filmmaker** who has produced a number of publications and films relating to National Socialism that have been released in various languages in Austria, Germany, Italy, France, Croatia, Spain, the Russian Federation, and the United States of America. He has given lectures at schools, universities and memorial sites in Europe and the USA, including Dresden University, Vienna University, Columbia University, Boston College, Georgetown University, Harvard University, Pepperdine University, University of Connecticut, UCLA, and Stanford University.

His meticulous pursuit of historical accuracy has earned the respect of fellow researchers and historians. With several film festival awards, and the acclaim of more than 2,000 news articles, online media, TV and radio stations around the globe, the public has rendered homage to his relentlessly passionate drive to be the calm, ordinary, yet powerful voice of those of underserved persecution.

Besides ***TAKING THE STAND*,** Rammerstorfer is the author of ***UNBROKEN WILL*** about concentration camp survivor Leopold Engleitner and is the producer of the documentary film of the same title. He also produced the documentaries ***UNBROKEN WILL CAPTIVATES THE US*, *UNBROKEN WILL USA TOUR***, and the award-winning documentary ***LADDER in the LIONS’ DEN***, which received 12 honors and awards from film festivals in the US and internationally, most recently, in June 2016, in Russia.
 ***Short Biography of Renée Firestone***

**“From Auschwitz to the Kennedy Center”**

**Grounds for persecution: Jew**

**Length of imprisonment: 1 year**

Renée Firestone, née Weinfeld, was born on April 13, 1924, in Užhorod in Eastern Czechoslovakia [now Ukraine] to a Jewish family. Following annexation of this region by Hungary in 1938, she had her first encounter with repression of the Jewish population at the hands of the Hungarian regime. She was no longer permitted to attend a state school. When the systematic extermination of Hungarian Jews began after Hitler’s invasion of Hungary, she, her parents, and her sister were confined in the Užhorod ghetto on April 29, 1944; and on May 26 of that year, she was deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. She was exposed to Dr. Josef Mengele’s dreaded selections on a daily basis and encountered him face-to-face on several occasions. In the autumn of 1944, she was sent to Liebau [now Lubawka] female forced labor camp in Silesia, a subcamp of Gross-Rosen concentration camp. She was liberated by the Russian army on May 8, 1945. Her mother was gassed, while her sister Klara was shot after having been the subject of experiments carried out by Dr. Hans Münch. Her father died shortly after he was liberated from the concentration camp. Only her brother Frank survived.

After the war, Renée Firestone lived in Prague before immigrating to the United States with her family in 1948. She worked as a fashion designer and ran a successful boutique. In 1998, she told her story in Steven Spielberg’s Oscar-winning documentary *The Last Days*. She regularly speaks about the Holocaust to young people in schools, at the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, and at the Los Angeles Museum of the Holocaust. Renée Firestone lives in Los Angeles, California.

***Short Biography of Hermine Liska***

**“An Eight-Year-Old Stands Her Ground”**

**Grounds for persecution: One of Jehovah’s Witnesses (Bible Student)**

**Length of imprisonment: 4 years, 3 months**

Hermine Liska, née Obweger, was born on April 12, 1930, on her parents’ farm in St. Walburgen in Carinthia, Austria. As a child of Bible Students, as Jehovah’s Witnesses were then known, she was raised in accordance with the principles of the Bible. She refused to join the Hitler Youth and use the greeting “Heil Hitler!” Because her father did not sign the order issued by the Nazi juvenile court that obliged him to bring Hermine up in the Nazi ideology, her parents’ right to raise their children was revoked.

In February 1941, Hermine Liska was taken away from her parents by the Nazis and put into “reeducation centers.” She was sent to the Waiern home for juveniles in Carinthia and the Adelgunden institute in Munich. Hermine Liska remained true to her principles, and after completing the mandatory year of community service for girls at an inn with a small farm in Carinthia, she was able to return home on May 8, 1945. After the war, she married, had three children, and became a housewife. Since 1999, she has visited schools all over Austria as a witness of history and every year tells as many as thirteen thousand students her story. Since 2002 she has been an official Holocaust Teacher on behalf of the Austrian Ministry for Education. In 2009, she was invited by the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC to relate her story. In 2015 she did a major lecture tour across the United States and shared her experiences with students, teachers and professors at several universities. Hermine Liska lives near Graz in Styria, Austria.

 **Short Biography of Richard Rudolph**

**“A Victim of Double Persecution”**

**Grounds for persecution: One of Jehovah’s Witnesses (Bible Student), conscientious objector**

**Length of imprisonment: 18 years, 11 months**

Richard Rudolph was born on June 11, 1911, in Rothenbach, Silesia, Germany [now Boguszów-Gorce, Poland]. World War I caused him to develop a deep revulsion of war and shattered his trust in the established churches. Following a long search for answers to the problems of humankind, he began an intensive study of the Bible and became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1935.

On July 2, 1936, Rudolph was arrested by the Gestapo for smuggling banned publications and imprisoned in the municipal prison in Hirschberg [now Jelenia Góra]. After two and a half years in the Hirschberg prison and the penitentiary and juvenile prison in Breslau [now Wrocław], and short terms of imprisonment in the Breslau police prison and Alexanderplatz police prison in Berlin, he was interned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp on January 26, 1939. There, on September 15, 1939, he witnessed the execution of August Dickmann, the first conscientious objector to be executed in World War II. After four years in Neuengamme concentration camp, during which he spent several weeks in its subcamps Darß-Wieck and Darß-Zingst, he was permanently transferred to another of Neuengamme’s subcamps—Salzgitter-Watenstedt/Leinde near Braunschweig. After that, he was briefly held in Ravensbrück concentration camp.

He was liberated in May 1945 while on the death march to the ocean liner *Cap Arcona*, anchored off Lübeck. Richard Rudolph spent a total of nine years in Nazi prisons and concentration camps.

After the war, he again found himself persecuted because of his beliefs, this time by the communist regime in the German Democratic Republic. In 1950, he was sentenced to fifteen years’ imprisonment. After this sentence had been reduced, he was held in communist prisons for ten years, until September 21, 1960. In January 1961, he succeeded in escaping to West Berlin in the Federal Republic of Germany. In the course of nearly nineteen years’ imprisonment, Rudolph was interned in six concentration camps and subcamps and nine prisons.

***Short Biography of Leopold Engleitner***

**“Unbroken Will”**

**Grounds for Persecution: One of Jehovah’s Witnesses (Bible Student), conscientious objector**

**Length of Imprisonment: 6 years, 5 months**

Leopold Engleitner was born into a Catholic family on July 23, 1905, in Aigen-Voglhub, Austrian-Hungary. As a child, he lived under the imperial and royal Austro-Hungarian monarchy and met Emperor Franz Joseph in Bad Ischl. As a schoolboy, he had to endure the terror of World War I. Following intensive study of the Bible in the early 1930s, he became one of Jehovah’s Witnesses in 1932. Religious intolerance during the period of Austrofascism (1934–1938) meant that Engleitner suffered unfair treatment at the hands of the authorities, and he was sentenced to several terms in Bad Ischl, St. Gilgen, Salzburg, and Bad Ausee prisons.

Owing to his faith as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses and his refusal to do military service, Engleitner was interned in the prisons in Bad Ischl, Linz, Wels, Salzburg, and Munich, as well as the concentration camps Buchenwald, Niederhagen, and Ravensbrück, and its subcamp Comthurey, from April 4, 1939, to July 15, 1943. He was released on the condition that he spend the rest of his life as a forced laborer working in agriculture. On April 17, 1945, he received his call-up papers for the German Wehrmacht. Engleitner fled into the mountains of the Salzkammergut region and hid there until May 5, 1945. After the war, he worked in agriculture and for the road maintenance department in Bad Ischl until his retirement in 1969.

Engleitner’s experiences were recorded in his biography ***Unbroken Will*** and the film documentary of the same name, both of which have been translated into several languages. Toward the end of the 1990s, Engleitner began speaking about his experiences at schools, universities and memorial sites in Europe and the United States. Even at such a great age, he has traveled over ninety-five thousand miles**—**almost four times the Earth’s circumference**—**to give talks as an eyewitness who campaigns against forgetting the lessons of history.

***Short Biography of Adolf Burger***

**“*The Counterfeiter*” *Grounds for persecution: Jew (political prisoner, Slovak)***

***Length of imprisonment: 2 years, 9 months***

Adolf Burger was born on August 12, 1917, in Grosslomnitz, Austria-Hungary [now Vel’ka Lomnica, Slovakia] to a Jewish family. Although a Jew, he was initially spared arrest due to his profession as a printer, but on August 11, 1942, he was taken into custody for printing [forged] Catholic certificates of baptism for Jews and having them legalized by a civil law notary.

Following three weeks in prison in Bratislava, he was sent to the camp in Žilina and, from September 19, 1942, to the concentration camps Auschwitz, Birkenau, Sachsenhausen, Mauthausen, Redl-Zipf, and Ebensee, from which he was liberated on May 6, 1945. As a printer, he was a member of the special detail known as “Operation Bernhard” in Sachsenhausen concentrationcamp and had to work in the “counterfeiters’ workshop,” printing millions of forged English pound notes. English postage stamps were also counterfeited. Liberation by American forces thwarted the plan to print fake US dollar bills. The counterfeit money was sunk in Lake Toplitz.

His wife, Gisela, was gassed in 1942 in Birkenau concentration camp. His mother and stepfather were also killed in a concentration camp. Hisbrother and sisters were able to escape to Israel.

After the war, he held talks about his experiences in numerous schools in Germany, Austria, and the Czech Republic. In all, he spoke to over a hundred thousand young people. Soon after the war, in October 1945, Burger wrote about his experiences in the book *Číslo 64401 mluví* (*Number 64401 Speaks*), and later in the book *The Devil’s Workshop*. This book formed the basis of the movie *The Counterfeiters*. Burger acted as adviser during the making of the film, which was an Oscar winner in 2008. Adolf Burger lives in Prague, Czech Republic.

 **BOOKS AND DVDs INFORMATION

*The Documentary Short* TAKING THE STAND**

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**Nine Holocaust survivors and victims of Nazi tyranny** [Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Sinti, and a political prisoner] from 5 different countries (Austria, Czech Republic, France, Germany, USA) have ‘taken the stand’ to give their testimony as a legacy for future generations.

Total running time: 30 minutes

$8.99 as a digital download
See: [www.TakingTheStand.net](http://www.TakingTheStand.net)

***The Book* TAKING THE STAND**

Nine Holocaust survivors and victims of Nazi tyranny have “taken the stand” to give their testimony as a legacy for future generations. They are from five different countries and were persecuted for reasons of ethnicity, politics/ideology, or religion. The catalog of questions, unique in the world, consists of 100 questions from 61 schools and universities in 30 countries on 6 continents. What is truly innovative about this book is that all the Holocaust survivors were asked the same questions. As a result, a point-for-point comparison of their answers is possible.

367 pages

Trade Paperback: $19.99 plus shipping and handling
Cloth Hardback: $29.99 plus shipping and handling
eBook: $3.99
See: [www.TakingTheStand.net](http://www.TakingTheStand.net)

***The accompanying DVD* TAKING THE STAND**

The DVD contains not only a short film biography of each of the nine survivors, but also a selection of their most interesting answers lasting approximately 10–20 minutes each. Also included is material for educational projects and exercises about the Holocaust and the films.

Total running time: 128 minutes
Languages: English, German
Producer: Bernhard Rammerstorfer

$19.99 plus shipping and handling
Also available as a digital download.
See: [www.TakingTheStand.net](http://www.TakingTheStand.net)

***The award winning documentary* LADDER in the LIONS’ DEN**

 **Why would a man faced with death in three Nazi concentration camps refuse to sign a document granting him his freedom?** This is the true story of Leopold Engleitner, who at 107 years old was the world’s oldest known male Nazi concentration camp survivor and Holocaust teacher. As a seemingly ordinary man who was given the choice between life and death, he found the extraordinary courage to stand by his conscience. Driven by his convictions, Leopold Engleitner took a stand against the Nazis, refusing to serve in Hitler’s army.
Spotlighted by the perspective of others who also suffered, such as Renée Firestone, a Jewish Auschwitz survivor, and Gottlieb Bernhardt (former SS bodyguard of Adolf Hitler), who himself faced a crisis of conscience, Leopold’s story resonates with the power of conviction and hope.

Total running time: 40 minutes
Producer: Bernhard Rammerstorfer
Co-Producer: A. Ferenc Gutai

$17.99 plus shipping and handling
Also available as digital download.
See: [www.unbrokenwill.com](http://www.unbrokenwill.com)

***The book* UNBROKEN WILL**

This book tells the true story of Leopold Engleitner, born 1905, who experienced World Wars I and II and found the extraordinary courage to refuse to serve in Hitler’s army. He suffered unspeakable cruelty in three concentration camps, and on release weighed less than 62 pounds. Astoundingly, he could easily have had his freedom: all he had to do was sign a paper renouncing his religious convictions as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. He refused to do it. Between 1999 and 2012, Engleitner traveled more than 95,000 miles across Europe and the USA to schools and universities as a witness of history to ensure that the past is not forgotten.The book is based on 19 years of intensive research by author Bernhard Rammerstorfer, who has written a historically accurate record of Engleitner’s life story.
352 pages

Trade Paperback: $19.99 plus shipping and handling
Cloth Hardback: $29.99 plus shipping and handling
eBook: $3.99
See: [www.TakingTheStand.net](http://www.TakingTheStand.net) or [www.unbrokenwill.com](http://www.unbrokenwill.com)

***The DVD* UNBROKEN WILL**

This DVD contains not only the full documentary on Engleitner’s life story (61 minutes) and an abridged version of it (27 minutes) but also five films (between 8–15 minutes) showing special events from 1999–2004 relating to Engleitner’s awareness-raising as a survivor of Nazi persecution. The DVD features additional educational material (background information) on the Holocaust.

Total running time: 148 minutes
Languages: English, German, Italian
Producer: Bernhard Rammerstorfer

$19.99 plus shipping and handling
Also available as digital download.
See: [www.TakingTheStand.net](http://www.TakingTheStand.net) or [www.unbrokenwill.com](http://www.unbrokenwill.com)

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