

AMSTERDAM PUBLISHERS

Ten Years, Sixty Books, Six Million Stories

SPEECH AT STUDIO LIBESKIND, NEW YORK CITY · 13 SEPTEMBER 2022

I would like to start by thanking Daniel and Nina Libeskind and the Dutch Consulate for generously hosting this special event.

I am very grateful to be able to celebrate the launch of Aftermath and the 10-year anniversary of my publishing house here at Studio Libeskind.

Just like her brother, Annette is a multi-talent. Although a scientist by education, she writes beautifully flowing prose; she has a delicate way of evoking senses through her words – choosing those words with great care.

Not only my congratulations with this achievement, Annette, but also a happy birthday!

A publisher exists by virtue of her authors. And I pride myself on having an outstanding and dedicated group of authors. I feel truly blessed. Today some are present: the award-winning Dr Kenneth Price who flew in from Texas, bestselling author, the amazing Nechama Birnbaum whose book, *The Redhead of Auschwitz*, is still a no 1 bestseller 10 months after its launch, and two to be published authors, Roslyn Bernstein and Oren Schneider.

Fortunately I saw many authors yesterday at the Dutch consulate, amongst which four Holocaust survivors.

Amsterdam Publishers is a small press (based in Holland) that is committed to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive by publishing books on the Shoah. The best way to do this, is by telling stories, true stories. History books with sheer numbers do not have nearly as much impact as stories that create an emotional connection.

Possibly, you have asked yourself the same question many of my authors have done: is she one of us? Is she Jewish? No, I am not, I am a Dutch agnostic. I do not believe, but I believe in the power of words. Words can make a change.

My motivation is connected to a sense of injustice. It most likely started with my mother telling me and my siblings at the dinner table how she, as a young girl, used to carry pamphlets in her bike for the Dutch resistance. One doesn't realize the significance of these things until much later. On a

deeper level, I feel a strong need to do something meaningful, to change the world as much as an individual is capable of changing the world.

Whether the books reach the audience they should be reaching is a question that preoccupies me most. How can I make sure that new generations are reading the books? Starting a new series 'Holocaust books for Young Adults' is not enough.

I would love the books to be part of the Holocaust curriculum of required reading in US schools. Several would make for excellent and impactful reading for students. One of my goals is to raise awareness among future generations and to preserve the heritage of witnesses of the Holocaust.

I brought along some books for you to see.

10 years with 60 books is a start. My job will only be finished when 6 million stories would be told.

On a personal level, I do not only feel blessed by the trust my authors – especially the survivors – have put in me, but first and foremost I am inspired by their resilience, and how they confronted the trauma of the past. They are teaching invaluable lessons in tolerance, kindness and acceptance. No one had more right to be bitter and angry at the world. Yet, they reclaimed their lives.

Their messages resonate with me every day.

LIESBETH HEENK · AMSTERDAM PUBLISHERS