

MUSEUMS OF TOLERANCE EDUCATION

Power of Testimony Facilitators Guide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Program Overview | 2 |
| Lesson Outcomes through Standards Alignment | 3 |
| Core Facilitation Approach | 4 |
| Pre-Workshop and Workshop Plan | 6 |
| Workshop Overview | 7 |
| Power of Testimony Memory Exercise | 8 |
| Historical Grounding and Timeline Activity | 10 |
| Brainstorm & Free write Activity | 11 |
| Journal Activity | 13 |
| Testimony Video and Body Mapping | 15 |
| Program Wrap Up | 16 |

POWER OF TESTIMONY FACILITATORS GUIDE

This guide is designed to assist facilitators in the delivery of The Power of Testimony Workshop. Facilitators will find instructional strategies to promote learner engagement, clear learning objectives, and all the materials required for effective workshop delivery. The workshop operationalizes MOT's unique pedagogical framework—rooted in Holocaust and genocide education, values-based dialogue, and social-emotional learning—to equip facilitators with tools to support participants through the learning process, allowing for active and thoughtful engagement in the workshop.

In alignment with our Pedagogical Framework, this workshop fosters learners' ability to:

- Situate Learners as Contributors to History
- Begin in Story, End in Story: Narrative as Transformational Change
- Emotion as a Source of Knowledge
- Primary Sources and Experiential Learning



Program Overview

On an individual level, testimony sharing, whether oral, written, or digital, has the power to heal and mend traumas, allows for rationalization and understanding of events, and fosters hope that sharing our lived experiences can deeply impact others. On a communal level, testimony creates shared understandings and builds bridges between the intrinsic values, beliefs, and truths of people from different walks of life. Elie Wiesel famously said, “to hear a witness is to become a witness,” and in that philosophy, we aim to push the idea further into our core values of being contributors to history and to empower individuals to feel the impact of testimony, seeing the value in sharing their own stories in the hopes of creating a better, more interconnected society.

Through our Power of Testimony workshop, learners enter a space of dialogue that puts into conversation the historical case studies of the Adolf Eichmann Trial and the Holocaust, as well as the Genocide Against the Tutsis in Rwanda. These two case studies, along with recorded eye-witness testimony, bring two generations of survivors into conversation around the themes of the healing power of testimony sharing, as well as provide a broader understanding of how genocide has been perpetuated over the generations. This workshop highlights how survivors have felt empowered to both heal themselves and listeners through their stories and offers a facilitator-led space for learners to be able to begin the process of sharing their own lived experience in their communities.

Lesson Outcomes through Standards Alignment

In alignment with C3 Social Studies Standards, the Social Justice Standards, and California's Transformative SEL Competencies, learners will:

- *Explore the role of testimony as a primary source that shapes historical understanding, along with static facts, by actively listening to the personal testimonies of survivors.*
- *Examine how memory can be shaped by socio-political and cultural factors, the media, and time.*
- *Understand historical denial by naming instances of its contribution to misinformation and distortion to understand its harm to historical truth and collective memory.*
- *Be equipped with tools for actively listening and engaging with testimony and creating personal narratives of their own through scaffolded writing processes.*

Grades: 9-12

Activity Launch

Paper, Pens, Body Map, Power of Testimony Video, Historical Exploration Activity Packet, and an object for memory exercise.

Duration

2 hours

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

- 1.) What factors shape our understanding of the past?
- 2.) How can we determine what historical truth is?
- 3.) In what ways do first-person testimonies shape collective memory and the preservation of historical truths?
- 4.) What do we lose when personal testimonies are not preserved?
- 5.) How do we empower ourselves and one another to share our testimonies?



Core Facilitation Approach

Situated Learning

MOT believes that learning is a communal process. Gone are the days of passive lectures and long videos. Instead, we lean on our dynamic pedagogical principles, which encourage inquiry and engagement-focused styles of learning, that situate the learners as active participants in history. Through this model, our aim is to move away from the expectation that learners will leave being able to recite dates and major key players in historical events, but rather that they will leave gaining critical thinking abilities, deeper emotional processes, and a humanization of the histories put before them in the workshops.

For this workshop, we will be diving deeply into narrative-focused learning and exploratory learning. Merging these two styles allows learners to understand how history is enhanced by eyewitness testimony and how it brings human elements to far-removed dates, places, and names.

Narrative-Based Learning Model

Narrative-based learning is one of the oldest forms of educational learning. Aligning with historic oral traditions, narrative learning situates learners' lives at the forefront of the educational experience. It can often increase student recollection of events and engage in social-emotional aspects of learning. In narrative-focused learning spaces, abstract concepts become more tangible as learners relate the information provided to their own values, beliefs, and worldviews.

Inquiry Focused Learning Best Practices

Relevancy Through Humanizing

Teaching static facts and history in a lecture-based style can quickly diminish student interest, as many learners might struggle to see the connections and relevancy to their own lives and lived experiences. Through narrative-based learning, melding facts and narrative can bring emotion into the learning space and create exciting and engaging workshops. The aim is to create mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors for our audiences, to allow learners to see themselves reflected in the workshops.

They Will Remember How We Made Them Feel

Using narrative helps us move beyond the retention of dates, times, and major players. Utilizing story in conversation with history allows learners to move to higher-order thinking and grasp larger social-emotional concepts within the histories we teach. A student is much more likely to remember how a testimony or narrative made them feel and can leave our workshops feeling empowered to carry on the larger lessons from our workshops, such as empathy, community, action, and allyship.

Accessibility as Key

Part of the MOT workshop experience is recognizing and adapting to the needs of the learners in our space. Narrative learning allows for a different modality of education to serve a wide variety of student needs. Narrative can be read on paper, voiced, drawn, and experienced in a wide array of platforms, allowing for reach to a larger student audience.

Core Facilitation Approach

Exploratory Learning Model

As part of our core pedagogical principles, we invite learners to be actively participate in their educational experience. Gone are the days of passive historical lectures and velvet ropes in a museum. In this model, learners engage in interactive and at times, kinesthetic investigation of materials, artifacts, and primary sources. This model aids learners in taking agency of their learning and builds resiliency that transfers to many disciplines and life skills.

Exploratory Focused Learning Best Practices

Learning as a Community

Through exploratory learning, learners come together for interactive experiences, and work in tandem with one another to discover historical truths. Rather than being led directly to the answers, learners engage in their own methodologies and processes in partnership.

Hands-on Learning

Exploratory learning often consists of immersive or interactive elements. This serves to situate learners as active participants in the educational process and engages them through various modalities of instruction.

Chaotic lawful

In exploratory learning, the environment deviates from the traditional sit-and-listen model of classrooms. At times, the environment can be noisy and messy depending on the activity. This does not mean disruptiveness or that learning is not taking place. In these models, the facilitator should also be active in sitting with groups, engaging in the activities, and focusing on the overall goals if they deviate.



Workshop Plan

Power of Testimony Pre-Workshop

Before beginning the workshop, you will place the object provided for you in a highly visible place in the room. Assure that the object is visible from all angles of the workshop space. This object will serve as the basis for the workshop's opening activity.

Welcome & Introduction

Greet all participants and check in with the teacher or group leader to assess learners' accessibility needs.

- Introduce yourself and share your preferred pronouns if comfortable.
- The Museum of Tolerance transforms history into action through immersive visitor experiences, dynamic programming, and foundational narrative strategies. Through immersive exhibits, tolerance-focused education, and values-aligned dialogue, we equip individuals to confront antisemitism, challenge prejudice, and engage in the ongoing work of social justice. As a dynamic space of reflection and responsibility, we activate the lessons of the Holocaust and other histories of intolerance to inspire empathy, civic engagement, and enduring acts of “chesed”—loving kindness—in communities around the world.

Definition of Tolerance

Ask participants:

- What does tolerance mean to you?
- When have you practiced or witnessed someone practicing tolerance?
 - What was that experience like? What happened? How did it make you feel?

Make sure learners understand that this is an open space for dialogue and that expression of topic-aligned thoughts, feelings, and interpretations is encouraged.

Landing Point: This provides an opportunity to reframe or expand learners' understanding of tolerance. Tolerance is a spectrum. By defining it at the outset, we encourage participants to be open and receptive to the diverse opinions and ideas shared by their peers throughout the workshop. This also provides a chance to reframe or expand their understanding of tolerance constructively.



Tolerance

The ability to recognize, respect, and value people of different races, religions, cultures, abilities, sexual orientations, genders, and nationalities. It serves as the foundation for acknowledging others' right to exist and to be treated with dignity.

INVITE LEARNERS TO RESPOND WITH THEIR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS TO THE MOT DEFINITION OF TOLERANCE.

Workshop Plan



Workshop Overview

Grounding participants in the “so what” is a necessity for any successful program. It is important to begin the session by introducing the anticipated learning gains and the purpose of the workshop.

“The Power of Testimony workshop will guide you through a balanced journey between static historical facts, and eye-witness testimony of historical events. You will engage with history through an exploratory and immersive, hands-on timeline activity. You will then listen to testimony of a Holocaust Survivor, and a Rwandan Genocide Survivor, and be able to share your written testimonies in this space.”

Student Reflection & Goals

After introducing the workshop theme, facilitators should ask the learners what they hope to learn or gain from the experience. This not only helps tailor the workshop to their interests but also fosters a sense of ownership and personal investment in the content.

- Ask for volunteers to write down their responses on post-it's chart paper. Invite learners to put their post-it on a master chart paper. Let participants know that at the end of the workshop, they will have an opportunity to reflect on their initial goals and assess whether they achieved what they hoped to gain from the experience.
- If learners are reluctant to share their goals publicly, they can keep their Post-it's.
- For those learners who need more processing time, invite them to write their questions or comments on the Post-it notes when they are ready.

You are the Container

One of the pillars of our programming is our ability to create containers for safe and open dialogue. We rely on our incredible facilitators to create a space for everyone who enters our learning experiences! Thank you for creating this container of reflection, connection, and transformation.



Power of Testimony Memory Exercise (15min)

Setting The Stage for Learning

Memory plays a key role in how testimony is shared, kept, and unfortunately, at times denied. How we remember events that affect ourselves and our communities can shape the way individuals and groups perceive an entire historical event. This can be seen on individual, communal, and global scales, as often testimony and memory can be both used to enhance and take away from events that happen. Together, in this portion of the workshop, we will explore how memory and testimony play a role in the historical cases of The Genocide Against the Tutsis in Rwanda, as well as the Holocaust and the Trial of Adolf Eichmann.

Pair Share Discussion Questions (4min)

1. How would you define testimony?

Testimony is the written or oral proof from eyewitness accounts that something existed or happened.

2. Where have you seen testimony being shared?
3. What do you think is the primary difference between a story and a testimony?
4. What are different ways we can use testimony?

Memory Exercise

As the facilitator wraps the introduction, the object that was placed in the room should be removed as covertly as possible. During this time, the facilitator can give a discussion prompt to keep learners' attention diverted during the removal process.

Pair Share Discussion Question

1. How do you define memory? What are ways you like to share memories with those around you? *After the discussion dwindles down, invite learners to briefly share their discussion.*

Activity Launch

- "I am sure many of you noticed the object that was present in the room with us. Raise your hand if you see the object. Now, what if I told you the object was never here, and in fact, I completely denied the object ever existed?"

Journal (2min)

- Prove to me that the object was ever there by journaling a detailed description of the object.
- When did you first notice the object?
- Describes its physical characteristics. Use as many of your senses as applicable.

Power of Testimony Memory Exercise (15min)

Pair/Share

Share your journal entry with your partner.

Whole Group Discussion

1. How did it feel to describe something that was no longer in the room?
2. What did it feel like to be told that something you experienced did not happen?

Transition

“Each of your individual testimonies about the object together formed our collective memory of the object. Collective Memory is the shared recollections of a series of events by members of a group. We are now going to explore testimony, what it means, and how it helps shape our understanding of history” (2min)

TRANSITION TO HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Testimony, alongside research and other primary sources, serves as a vital tool for preserving the memory of historical events and countering the effects of historical denial. Moreover, testimony helps humanize the past and deepen experiences that we often deem as far off in history, or even so large-scale, that we struggle to wrap our minds around numbers and statistics.

Eyewitnesses in instances like The Holocaust, or the Genocide Against the Tutsis in Rwanda, provided the foundations for the prosecution of War Criminals and perpetrators, as well as laid the foundation for collective healing and reconciliation after these horrific events.



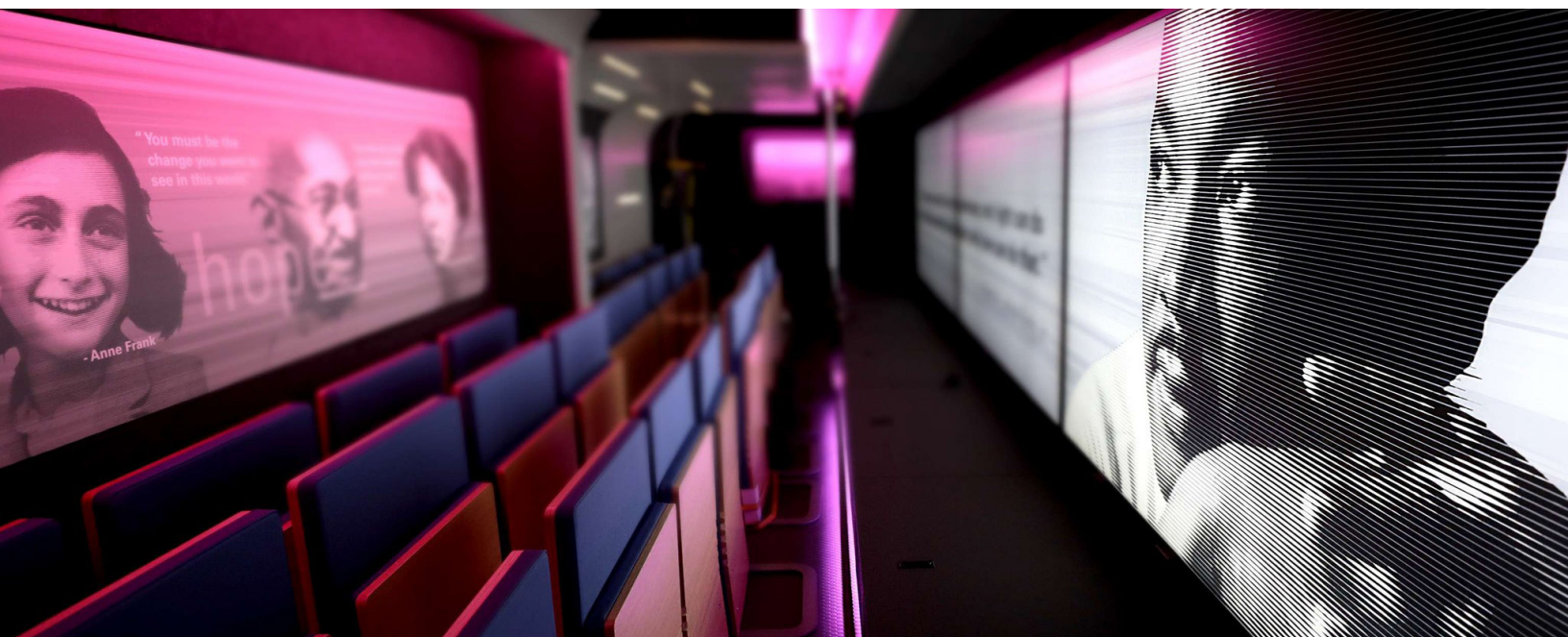
Historical Grounding and Timeline Activity (40min)

Foundational Historical Case Studies

- The Genocide Against the Tutsis in Rwanda 1994
- The Trial of Adolf Eichmann 1961

Exploratory Historical Grounding Activity

- Learners should be broken up into **four groups**.
 - Two groups will be given packets with materials on The Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and the other groups will be given a packet briefing them on The Holocaust and Trial of Adolf Eichmann.
 - These packets will include photographs of major figures involved, maps, quotes from witnesses, a blank timeline, and a brief historical write-up on the events.
 - **Learners will be given 25 minutes** to go over the materials and fill in the timelines with the information provided to them. They will be provided with the following questions to note as they explore
1. What were three major takeaways that you learned from the write-up? Why did you feel that it was important to share these three pieces of information?
 2. After seeing photographs and reading the quotes from eyewitness testimonies, did they change the way you saw the event? How?
 3. How was reading the quotes different than reading the historical write-up?
 4. Do you feel historical testimony is important? Why?
- **During the group breakout sessions**, ensure that you are visiting each group and engaging them in their process. Ask each group what their investigative methods are, what they have learned at that point, and what resonates with them most as they move through the activity.
 - **After the learners complete the timeline activity**, invite each group to share their findings with the larger workshop group, and invite time for Q&A of each group's discovery.



Brainstorm & Free Write Activity

Freewriting Process

Freewriting allows learners to write in a space unhindered by grammatical, syntactical, and structural constraints. During a free write, learners should be encouraged to write completely stream of consciousness and not let pen leave paper for the time allotted. This tried-and-true technique is a wonderful way for learners to overcome any writer's block and is an inclusive way to invite learners to participate in the writing experience.

Brainstorm/Free Write (5 min)

Respond to the quote provided for you:

A poet and journalist Haim Gouri, who covered the Eichmann trial, described listening to a survivor, Morris Fleischmann, giving his testimony: "I did not want to see him, and I did not want to hear him. I would have preferred to go today to the military parade at the stadium, to see Jews at their strongest and most beautiful. But with an uncanny force, this Morris Fleischmann grabbed hold of us by the scruff of our necks, as if to say, 'Sit still and hear me out.'"

- After reading the quote, respond to the final line "sit still and hear me out." You will begin and end your writing with the above line, and free write a narrative you would like the world to know about you. It can be whatever testimony you feel is an important part of yourself that you would like to share. This will be the foundation for the testimony sharing activity that follows.
- *Invite learners to share their writing if they are comfortable and able. They can choose to summarize what they wrote or read their blurb aloud.*

TRANSITION TO PERSONAL NARRATIVE ACTIVITY

"Now that we have jotted down our free writes and ideas, we will now begin to develop our own personal narratives. In the same way you wrote freely, I encourage you to try not to self-edit and to avoid overthinking the writing process. Your creativity and voice are the most important aspects of a narrative. Also, we encourage you to practice self-care during this process, whether that means seeking out a quiet space, listening to music, or discussing ideas with your peers."





Personal Narrative Activity

Facilitator Framing

Personal narrative writing is an extremely vital component of understanding how testimony functions in our society. Research shows that when learners can author their own stories, they are more likely to receive, process, and share other testimonies they hear and experience. Narrative writing and listening allows learners to open their minds to new perspectives and ideas that they may have been closed off to, or uninterested in previously.

Tips for Setting the Stage for Narrative Writing

- Remind learners that there is no right or wrong way to present their narratives. Their experiences are their own, and they should focus on how they want their stories to be seen, rather than how others want to see them.
- Writing in stages assists in the creative process when asking learners to journal their narratives.
- Narrative writing celebrates multilingualism. Whether it is writing in your native language, writing in the dialect in which you speak, or using slang when you write, your narrative should stay true to the voice you are most comfortable with.
- Share what you want to share. No one should ever feel pressure to share anything they are not comfortable with.
- Trigger warnings: All our narratives vary from differing lived experiences. Some individuals may be more comfortable than others talking about certain topics or subjects. If a student's writing reflects difficult topics, be sure they are adding the necessary trigger warnings for their writing. This is not to shame or to judge, but rather to create a safe space for all learners in the workshop.

Journal Activity: (30 minutes)

As learners, think of a specific memory or a defining moment or milestone in their life. It can be a moment they feel helped to shape the person they are today and/or supported their understanding of who they are and even how they understand their role within society.

Once learners decide on a memory, have them consider the following questions:

1. Was anyone else involved in the memory you selected?
2. How did they impact what happened?
3. Why did you choose this moment?
4. What would you want others to understand about the importance of this event?



- Give learners time to synthesize their ideas. Although we might be tempted to check in frequently, this time is important for learners to have solitary writing time.
- If you notice learners are distracted or not engaging in the prompt, sit with the student and begin helping them brainstorm the questions posed.

Tips

It helps learners not to write in silence. Putting soft music on can help the creative process and make the writing space more comfortable.

Activity Closing

Invite any learners who want to share their journal responses with a partner or the class.



Final Group Reflection Question

“How does sharing our own testimonies and hearing others develop our own sense of self (who we are as individuals) and as a community?”

Alternative Assignment

Many learners may not be comfortable with the writing process, sharing personal testimony, or may have different accessibility needs. Because of this, MOT strives to create multi-faceted workshops that allow learners to have an “opt out” assignment. This assignment may include self-reflection time, reading, writing, or drawing activities.

Engaging with The Bella Letter

Materials: [Bella Letter Documents](#)

The Bella Letter Activity is based on a physical exhibit at the MOT in Los Angeles.

Directions

Read the story of Bella and then follow the journey of getting her letter to Henri Zylbermanc and her other friends.

Prompt learners to respond to the following questions in their journal

1. What was your initial reaction to reading the letter?
2. What makes Bella's letter a primary source and a testimony?
3. What have you learned about Bella through reading her story?
4. What would you say are her key characteristics?
5. Based on what you have read about her actions, what values have shaped Bella's decisions?
6. What resonated with you in reading her letter?
7. How does sharing our own testimonies and hearing others develop our own sense of self (who we are as individuals) and as a community?

Facilitation Best Practices

- Ensure you are checking in with learners as they move through the activity. Prompt them to share with you any insights or answers to their questions
- Invite any learners who want to share their journal responses with a partner or the class.

TRANSITION TO HISTORICAL TESTIMONIES: (2 MINUTES)

“Now that we have had an opportunity to share our own testimonies, and to read the testimonies of others, we will now be listening to two survivors, Dydine Umonyana and Ella Mandel, who have bravely shared their stories with us. During this video, we ask that you listen respectfully, and that you take notes about what you see, hear, and feel on the body map we provided for you. Some of the testimonies you will hear contain difficult subject matter and we invite you all to practice self-care when needed in this space.”



Testimony Video and Body Mapping (20min)

For this portion of the workshop, learners will engage with a video featuring Dydine Umutyana, a survivor of the Genocide Against the Tutsi in Rwanda, and Ella Mandel, a survivor of The Holocaust. These stories in conversation with one another demonstrate the value of narrative and testimony sharing, and how sharing one's lived experience can bridge the gaps of generations and create human connection and healing.

Facilitation Best Practices

- **Before showing the testimony video**, reinforce that although testimony is a valuable addition in history, it is of the utmost importance that we also investigate the static facts and data from those time periods as well. The best histories we can learn include a careful balance of eyewitness testimony and facts.
- **Recommended Dialogue:** *"Survivors of atrocities often have their voices stolen, and so testimony is not just about recalling an event but about reclaiming a lost voice and can serve as part of healing."*

Video Activity

As learners watch the video, invite them to fill out the body map provided. Learners should pay close attention to how the survivors physically respond.

- Is there tension in their hands?
- Are they making eye contact?
- What does their face indicate?

Physical responses are important to notice when watching testimony, as they give us insight into how to respond to ourselves and others and help us better regulate our own emotional processes when sharing testimonies.

Once the video concludes, invite learners to share what they added to their body map.

Testimony Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the person felt the need to share their testimony especially as it frequently brings back traumatic recollections?
2. What specifically about this person's testimony resonated with you?
3. What makes personal testimony so compelling?
4. How might the physical space that the person is in while sharing their testimony affect their testimony?
5. Did the testimony challenge your thinking, or change or broaden your understanding of this historical event? How?

Connection Back to Activities

Once learners conclude the body mapping activity and testimony video, revisit the box activity and engage them in the following connection:

1. Imagine if one person such as a powerful figure or a group of learners denied the objects' existence. What would happen to your belief that the box was ever here?
2. Why do you think someone would want to deny the existence of an object?
3. Have you ever had a similar experience of feeling unheard or that your voice was silenced?

Program Wrap Up

Whole Group Discussion

1. What do we lose when we fail to listen to and preserve others' testimonies?
2. How can we ensure that all voices are heard, and that the truths we share are respected and preserved?

Remind learners that their voices and stories are powerful vessels for contributing to history and combatting denial. It is normal to feel like our voices are drops in a bucket, but people like Ella and Dydine, with their powerful testimonies, empower us to share our own stories and ours, to build community and memory, and to make the world a better place.

Listening to one another's testimonies opens us up to new perspectives and opportunities to grow in our beliefs, understandings, and community. Testimony humanizes history and allows us to not just be passive observers in the histories that often seem so far removed from us. We encourage every learner to continue sharing their stories, and to continue carrying on the narratives they have heard from the survivors and their communities. Holocaust survivor Ellie Wiesel once said, "to hear a witness is to become a witness" and today we carry on that legacy.

Thank learners for attending the workshop and let them know you are available for any further questions.

THANK YOU FOR READING THE FACILITATOR'S GUIDE! WE HOPE YOU ENJOY TEACHING THESE WORKSHOPS AND KNOW THAT THE MOT CONTENT TEAM IS HERE FOR ALL YOUR QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS WONDERFUL AND EXCITING NEW WORKSHOP!

This is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education, established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from the California Department of Education, Marin County Office of Education, and the State of California.

