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The Federations of North America

Rabbi Israel Singer
Julius Berman
Gideon Taylor
Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany
15 E. 26th Street
New York, NY 10010

Dear Israel, Julie and Gideon;

On behalf of the UJC Holocaust Survivors Services Committee, we want to express our gratitude for your participation in our meeting on July 7th and for your prior assistance and counsel. The Committee members have great respect for the accomplishments of the Claims Conference during the past 50 years and we appreciated the frankness with which you addressed issues and questions.

The July 7th meeting was in the nature of an orientation. We anticipate that the Committee will be continuing deliberations in the coming weeks. While conclusions and recommendations thus far are preliminary, we believe it important to communicate our current thinking to you as soon as possible.

The Committee is convinced that the needs of some Holocaust survivors in the United States and Canada are urgent. While more data are required to understand the full extent of the need, the available evidence alone is compelling. Clearly, a response to the call for help should be the responsibility of every Jewish agency with the mandate and capacity to act. However, the Claims Conference is uniquely positioned in this regard from the point of view of its historical role, mandate, and resources.

As you well know, the issue of the 80-20 split in the allocation of Successor Organization funds has generated keen interest. To be sure, any formula for allocating discretionary funds is bound to draw criticism. Still, the Committee respectfully though strongly urges that the Claims Conference increase the amount of funding designated for direct services for needy survivors in North America through the use of restitution resources that are under your control or influence. The need is especially acute for those near the poverty line who are not eligible to receive government assistance. We believe that decisive action in this direction is warranted now.

UJA Federation Campaign

We also take very seriously your reminder that federations have an important responsibility for meeting human service needs, including special needs that may require extraordinary attention. In this regard, we have agreed to follow-up conversations about the role that UJC could play in raising the profile of this issue within the federation system, and encouraging further support at the local level.

In addition, the Committee discussed the need for more specific data on Holocaust survivors in the United States, especially pertaining to income and eligibility for government subsidized services. We will be doing so through further analysis of recent U.S. and Canadian Jewish demographic studies. Further, we will pursue discussion with the Special Master for the Holocaust Victim Assets Litigation (Swiss Banks) to explore possibilities for funds from that source. Indeed, seeking more funds from a variety of sources through combined efforts of the Claims Conference and the UJC might well be an effective approach.

We look forward to continuing our conversation with you in the very near future, perhaps in the form of a small working group of members of both agencies.

We would be pleased if you convey our warm appreciation along with our other thoughts to your Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

Leonard Cole, Chair UJC Holocaust Survivors Services Committee

Lorraine Blass, UJC Senior Planner