

A Tribute Resolution Honoring Dita Kraus, “The Librarian of Auschwitz”

Whereas January 27, 2020, was the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, a World War II concentration camp in Poland created by Nazi Germany;

Whereas Dita Kraus, “the librarian of Auschwitz,” was born July 12, 1929 in Prague as Edith (“Dita”) Polokova;

Whereas Dita Kraus was deported to Theresienstadt in November 1942 for being of Jewish heritage, and then, at age 13, in December 1942, to Auschwitz where she received the tattoo 73305 on her lower left arm, she was assigned to Block 31, the *Kinderblock* (Children’s Block), where the infamous Nazi doctor Josef Mengele kept the children that were destined to be used for his medical experiments;

Whereas In this inhuman and dehumanizing environment, the young Dita maintained a library for the younger children with the guidance of teacher Fredy Hirsch;

Whereas Dita Kraus’s library consisted of just eight books, including a Czech translation of *The History of the World* by G.H. Wells, smuggled from the luggage of Jews arriving on the selection ramps at Auschwitz;

Whereas Dita Kraus kept the flame and passion of learning alive as a librarian who gave her younger charges a look at the world, a world most of them would never know;

Whereas Dita Kraus used her small library as an affirmation of life, an interior intellectual oasis, and sought with only a handful of books, fragments at best, a defense against the inhumanity of the Nazi killing machine;

Whereas We librarians know the saying that books have their own fate, *habent libri fata sua*, with Dita Kraus, the 90-year-old “librarian of Auschwitz,” we would rephrase this maxim: not only books, but also librarians have their fate, *non solum libri, sed etiam librariae habent fata sua*;

Whereas In the tradition of the sixth-century librarian Cassidorus of the Benedictine monastery library Vivarium in Calabria, Dita Kraus endeavored to create a similar refuge in Auschwitz, a *vivarium* in the midst of mass murder;

Whereas Dita Kraus, despite knowing that many of her young charges would probably be murdered, persisted in teaching them how to read, giving them insights into what it means to be human in the face of the immense inhumanity that was Auschwitz;

Therefore, at the suggestion of Julia Nephew, ALA member and Children Services Librarian at Addison Public Library, Addison, Illinois and Earl Jeffrey Richards, Professor Emeritus, University of Wuppertal, Germany; be it

Resolved, that the American Library Association (ALA) on behalf of its members:

**2019-2020 ALA Tribute #2
2020 ALA Midwinter Meeting**

1. honors and is grateful to Dita Kraus for her dedication, courage and commitment to the ideal of a library as a beacon of humanity in the midst of barbarism.

2. expresses its gratitude for the example she has set to librarians across the world.

Mover: Paula Laurita, Alabama Chapter Councilor

Seconded by:

Eileen M. Palmer, New Jersey Chapter Councilor

Mary Glendening, Councilor-at-Large

Rhonda K. Gould, Councilor-at-Large

Deb Sica, Rainbow Round Table Councilor

Erin Stalberg, ALCTS Division Councilor

Sandy Hirsh, International Relations Round Table Councilor

Shannon DeSantis Gile, ALA Councilor-at-Large

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