

Katahdin Productions
Presents



**International Distribution /
North American Distribution**
Go2Films
Hedva Goldschmidt Hedva@go2films.com

US • 2022 • 74 minutes • 16:9 • 5.1 Stereo • NR • English, German, Hebrew

THE FILMMAKERS

Written, Directed and Produced by.....ROBERTA GROSSMAN

Produced by.....KAREN HEILIG

Co-Producer.....JULY HODARA

Cinematography by.....ALEX POLLINI

Edited by.....CHRIS CALLISTER

Featuring Music by.....TODD BOEKELHEIDE

Executive in Charge for the Claims Conference.....BARBARA GHAMMASHI

Executives in Charge for the German Finance Ministry..... ANNA GERITS

Executive in Charge for Katahdin Productions.....DEANN BORSHAY LIEM

Historical Consultant.....KAI WAMBACH

RECKONINGS

Logline

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, the unprecedented destruction and plight of survivors prompts the unthinkable – German and Jewish leaders meet in secret to grapple with the first reparations in history.

RECKONINGS

Short Synopsis

In the aftermath of the Holocaust, secret meetings began to negotiate the incomprehensible – compensation for survivors of the largest mass genocide in history. Survivors were in urgent need, but how could reparations be determined for the unprecedented destruction and suffering of a people? Reckonings explores this riveting, untold story.

RECKONINGS

Synopsis

They met in secret to negotiate the unthinkable – compensation for the survivors of the largest mass genocide in history. Survivors were in urgent need of help, but how could reparations be determined for the unprecedented destruction and suffering of a people? Reckonings explores this untold true story set in the aftermath of the Holocaust.

Directed by award-winning filmmaker Roberta Grossman, Reckonings recounts the tense negotiations between Jewish and German leaders. Under the constant threat of violence, they forged ahead, knowing it would never be enough but hoping it could at least be an acknowledgement and a step towards healing.

RECKONINGS

Long Synopsis

It's been said that it felt as if the souls of the six million who were murdered during the Holocaust were in the room with them when the meetings began. They met in secret to negotiate the unthinkable – compensation for the survivors of the largest mass genocide the world had ever known. Survivors were in urgent need of help, but how could reparations be determined for the unprecedented destruction of a people and atrocities suffered by millions? *Reckonings* explores this fascinating true story set in the aftermath of the Holocaust and leading to the groundbreaking Luxembourg Agreements of 1952.

Directed by award-winning filmmaker Roberta Grossman (*Who Will Write Our History*) and commissioned by the German Ministry of Finance and the Claims Conference, the film is the first documentary feature to chronicle the harrowing process of negotiating German reparations for the Jewish people. It takes viewers from the halls of power in Bonn, West Germany, where fierce debate raged over how to pay wartime debts, to the streets of Jerusalem, where horror about any talks with Germany led to violent protests and a mob storming the Knesset. It profiles Jewish and German leaders who risked their lives to meet in a hidden castle near the Hague to negotiate the impossible. It captures the anger on one side, the shame on the other, and the anguish for all as talks broke down and failure seemed imminent. And it honors the behind-the-scenes figures who forged ahead to continue negotiations, knowing the compensation would never be enough but hoping it could at least be an acknowledgement, a recognition and a step toward healing.

Filmed in six countries and featuring new interviews with Holocaust survivors, world-renowned scholars and dignitaries and the last surviving member of the negotiating delegations, *Reckonings* powerfully illustrates how political will and a moral imperative can join forces to bridge an impossible divide. By confronting the past, the German and Jewish leaders charted a better future for a desperate and traumatized people. Their actions led to the first time in history that individual victims of persecution received material compensation from the perpetrators.

RECKONINGS

Director's Statement

When asked to direct *Reckonings*, the story of the groundbreaking Luxembourg Agreements, I welcomed the opportunity to investigate not the Holocaust itself, but the aftermath for survivors, the Jewish world and Germany.

The story goes far beyond the Holocaust and could not be more relevant to the current day. The Luxembourg Agreements, signed in 1952 by three entities that didn't even exist before the war (Israel, West Germany and the Claims Conference) set in motion the very first reparations ever paid by a state to individuals they harmed.

This unprecedented achievement would never have happened save for the efforts of visionary individuals who overcome all odds to do the impossible – to sit across the table from representatives of the very people who had committed the greatest genocide in history. They did it to help the survivors who, as one negotiator said, “lost everything. They had only the tattoos on their arms.” It also required the foresight of leaders on the German side, who had the courage to face and acknowledge their country's unfathomably evil acts and open themselves up to a reckoning.

Reckonings explores the impact of compensation on the survivors, Israel and on Germany itself. As one interviewee states: “In the last seventy years, we have discovered that reparations not only help the victims, but the perpetrators as well. An honest confrontation with your past is the best way to build a better future.”

I hope that *Reckonings* can provide some hope for solutions to seemingly intractable problems.

RECKONINGS

Featured Survivors

HELENA WEINRAUCH

Helena Weinrauch was born in 1924 to a pianist mother and an engineer father in Dusseldorf, Germany. The family moved to Poland a few years later for her father's job. After being discovered living under false identity, she was sent to Plaszow, an interim stop before Auschwitz. By the winter of 1944, the Germans evacuated Auschwitz forcing prisoners on the infamous Death March to Bergen-Belsen. It was three weeks of walking 500 miles in below freezing temperatures, wearing only a camp uniform. She was liberated there by the British. She lost her parents and her sister. She emigrated to the United States in 1947.

TOVA FRIEDMAN

Tova Friedman was born in 1938 and came from the Polish town of Tomashov Mazowiecki, near Lodz. Tova Friedman is among the youngest people to survive the Nazi Holocaust, and one of the few Jewish children to have lived through Auschwitz. At the end of the war only five children from Tomashov were still alive. She lost over 150 family members during the Holocaust. She waited three years in Poland hoping for her family to return, finally emigrating to the United States in 1950.

CHAVA NISSIMOV

Chava Nissimov was born in 1939 in Warsaw, Poland. She was smuggled in a sack out of the Warsaw Ghetto and was living in hiding, often behind a closet, for nearly three years. Her father was deported from the ghetto and murdered. She emigrated to Israel in 1948.

IRENE WEISS and SERENA NEUMANN

Irene Weiss and Serena Neumann are sisters born in 1930 and 1927 in Bótrágy, Czechoslovakia (now Batrad, Ukraine). When Nazi Germany dismembered Czechoslovakia in 1939, Bótrágy, came under Hungarian rule. In the Spring of 1944 they were deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Irene was 13 years old, Serena was 17 years old. Upon arrival at the camp, their mother, three younger siblings and older brother were killed. Their father was killed a few weeks later. After 8 months of slave labor in Birkenau, Irene and Serena and two aunts were forcibly evacuated on foot from Auschwitz in January 1945 to Ravensbruck and Neustadt-Glewe. They immigrated to New York in 1947.

RECKONINGS

Filmmaker Bios

ROBERTA GROSSMAN (Written, Directed and Produced by)

An award-winning filmmaker with a passion for history and social justice, Roberta Grossman has written, directed and produced more than 40 hours of film and television. What sets her films apart are high production values, beautiful cinematic craftsmanship and inspiring protagonists. Grossman's films tell stories of ordinary people doing extraordinary things in the name of justice. According to Grossman, "making a documentary is like pushing Sisyphus' rock up a steep mountain. The only way to summit is to have a sense of personal responsibility to tell a story that would otherwise remain untold."

Grossman most recently wrote, produced and directed *Who Will Write Our History* (2018) about Emanuel Ringelblum and the secret archive of the Warsaw Ghetto, co-produced by Arte and NDR. Also in 2018, Grossman co-directed and produced the Netflix Original Documentary *Seeing Allred*, about women's rights attorney Gloria Allred. *Seeing Allred* premiered in competition at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and was described as "remarkably engaging" (*The New York Times*), "utterly fascinating" (CNET) and "an ideal companion to the #MeToo movement" (*Variety*). Grossman is currently producing *Vishniac*.

In 2014, Grossman directed *Above and Beyond* for producer Nancy Spielberg, about the American-Jewish WWII pilots who volunteered to fight for Israel in the 1948 War. That film won the audience award at more than 20 film festivals worldwide. Grossman's 2012 *Hava Nagila (The Movie)*, which used the song as a portal into 150 years of Jewish history, culture and spirituality, was the opening or closing night film at more than 30 film festivals. *Blessed Is the Match: The Life and Death of Hannah Senesh*, Grossman's 2008 film was shortlisted for an Academy Award, won audience awards at 13 film festivals, aired on PBS/Independent Lens and was nominated for a Primetime Emmy. Grossman also produced *Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning*, which aired on PBS/American Masters in 2014, and executive produced *On the Map* in 2016 for director Dani Menkin. Grossman was the series producer and co-writer of *500 Nations*, the eight-hour CBS series on Native Americans hosted by Kevin Costner. Her film *Homeland: Four Portraits of Native Action*, aired on PBS in 2005.

Grossman is a member of the Academy of Motion Pictures Arts and Sciences. She is a three-time recipient of grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of the University of California at Berkeley with an M.A. in film from the American Film Institute.

KAREN HEILIG (Producer)

Karen Heilig has participated in negotiations between the Claims Conference and the German Government since 1999, breaking ground as the first female representative for the Claims Conference. During this time, she spent many hours with Saul Kagan, one of the negotiators of the Luxembourg Agreements, and heard firsthand stories of these unprecedented events. She recognized that the achievements of today were built upon the foresight of those early leaders. Understanding 70 years of compensation agreements from a personal, legal and historical perspective – inside the negotiating room and interacting with those who were there – Karen was uniquely positioned to help bring this important film to life.

JULY HODARA (Co-Producer)

A native of France, film producer and storyteller July Hodara completed her undergraduate studies at the University of California, Berkeley before joining Katahdin Productions in 2011. The first film she produced and directed was *Hidden* (2006), an American adaptation of French documentary *Les Enfants Cachés* (1998) about Jewish children who survived WWII in hiding. July's first project at Katahdin Productions was *Hava Nagila (The Movie)* (2012) with director Roberta Grossman. She stayed on to associate produce *Above and Beyond* (2014) with producer Nancy Spielberg, *On The Map* (2016) with director Dani Menkin, and Netflix Original 2018 Sundance selection *Seeing Allred* (2018). She co-produced 2019 Berlinale selection *Who Will Write Our History* (2018). After her work on those five award-winning documentary features, she pursued her Master's in Cinema and Media Studies at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, graduating in 2020. July founded New Moons Productions in 2019, a media company through which she develops various projects, with a particular interest for women's stories. She came on as co-producer for Katahdin features *Vishniac* (2023) with director Laura Bialis, and *Reckonings* (2022) with the Claims Conference and the German Ministry of Finance as production partners.

ALEX POLLINI (Director of Photography)

Alex Pollini developed an affection for photography and film while growing up in the mountains of the Eastern Sierra. Inspired by the works of adventure photographer Galen Rowell, he discovered his passion for creating emotional connections through powerful and authentic images. Today he pursues this passion through motion pictures. He strives to capture thought-provoking stories that transcend genre and format. From ancient Buddhist dances in the Himalayas, to diamond mines in the Canadian tundra, to the lives of Los Angeles foster youth, his mission is to inspire viewers to reflect and re-examine their lives and perceptions of the world. Recent accolades include a Sundance Official Selection for documentary "Seeing Allred", a "Prime Time Emmy Nomination" for the Opening Title Sequence for HBO's *Olive Kitteridge*, and "Best Cinematography" nominations at the La Jolla International Fashion Film Festival, Chicago Blow Up International Art House Film Festival, and Artlightenment Film Festival. Los Angeles based - IATSE Local 600

CHRIS CALLISTER (Editor)

Chris Callister is a Los Angeles-based filmmaker focused primarily on editing documentaries.

In 2018, he finished the Netflix Original Documentary "Seeing Allred", which premiered in competition at the 2018 Sundance Film Festival and was praised by The New York Times for its "excellent and well edited collection of news footage" charting attorney Gloria Allred's legal fights and victories. Also in 2018, Callister was editor and 2nd Unit Director for the feature-length Holocaust documentary "Who Will Write Our History," and served as an editor on the Netflix Original Documentary Series "Evil Genius".

He has written and directed multiple music and concert videos for one of the most popular rock bands in the world, The Killers. Other editing credits include "Mimi and Dona" (2015) which aired on the PBS Series Independent Lens, "Hotel Everest" (2017), "Ishi's Return" (2016), "Above and Beyond" (2014) and "Hava Nagila (The Movie)" (2012). Callister has previously edited for The History Channel, Universal Sports Network and the Sundance Institute. Other credits include the feature film "Cyrus" (apprentice editor); and the short film "The Liar" (writer, director and editor), which screened at numerous festivals including the Santa Barbara International Film Festival. Chris received his master's degree in film production from the University of Southern California in 2007.

TODD BOEKELHEIDE (Music)

Having edited picture and sound, and having mixed numerous Oscar-winning films, Todd brings a wealth of filmmaking experience and sensitivity to his scoring work. Among his scoring credits are Hearts of Darkness: A Filmmaker's Apocalypse, Ballets Russes, Blessed is the Match, Who Will Write Our History, and Irmi. He lives in Berkeley, California, with his wife Jen Bradwell, who is a film editor, and their two children.

RECKONINGS
On-Camera Interviews

Witnesses

Bettina Adenauer-Bieberstein
Benjamin Ferencz
Yaakov Sharett

Survivors

Tova Friedman
Serena Neumann
Chava Nissimov
Helena Weinrauch
Irene Weiss

Scholars

Rachel Blumenthal
Michael Berenbaum
Michael Brochard
Dan Diner
Constantin Goschler
Jacob Tovy
Roni Stauber
Ronald Zweig

Representatives of Claims Conference

Stuart Eizenstat
Greg Schneider
Gideon Taylor

Representatives of the German Government

Werner Gatzert
Wolfgang Schäuble

Representative of the Government of Israel

Isaac Herzog