

**Greeting Markus Lautenschläger**  
**European Civil Rights Award 2023**

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dear Madam President of the Bundestag,

Dear Mr. Libeskind,

Dear guests,

Dear Romani,

It is a great honor and pleasure for me to present the **European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma in memory of Oskar and Vinzenz Rose** to the architect Daniel Libeskind today.

Our foundation's work is, among other things, based on the conviction that German history gives rise to a special responsibility for dealing with the Sinti and Roma minority. For us, this award is therefore also linked to an appeal to society to stand up against all forms of antiziganism and not to accept it under any circumstances.

Since the first award of the Civil Rights Prize in 2008, it has been awarded again and again to personalities who have awakened or raised awareness of the historical injustice of the Holocaust against more than 500,000 Sinti and Roma.

This National Socialist terror perpetrated against the Sinti and Roma should not and must not be marginalized or forgotten. And to this day, Sinti and Roma are often enough pushed into anonymity or associated with stereotypes and prejudices.

For me, the Civil Rights Prize also symbolizes the hope of overcoming antiziganism and this exclusion.

The work of our prize winner this year, Daniel Libeskind, is an expression of an increasing recognition of the historical fact that there is a common fate of persecution of Sinti and Roma and Jews.

This is particularly true of the Holocaust memorials he designed in Amsterdam, Ottawa and Auschwitz. They are committed to the principle of a common commemoration of all victims of the National Socialist extermination policy.

We are therefore convinced that Daniel Libeskind's work raises social awareness of the fact that the Holocaust also included the murder of 500,000 Sinti and Roma.

Even the first winner of the Civil Rights Prize, former Polish Foreign Minister Władysław Bartoszewski, repeatedly emphasized the parallel nature of the Holocaust against Sinti and Roma and Jews:

"Similarly, just as there is no Jewish family that did not lose relatives in this hell [of Auschwitz], there is no Sinti and Roma family that does not have victims to mourn."

In relation to Germany, Daniel Libeskind's works are especially important because our culture of remembrance is still strongly characterized by coexistence rather than togetherness.

That is why we want to honor Daniel Libeskind today with the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma. It is to be hoped that his example will set a precedent internationally and lead to even more people feeling addressed to take a stand against antiziganism.

Dear Mr. Libeskind, I would now like to ask you to join me to receive the award. Dear Romani, I also ask you to join me in presenting the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma.

## **Romani Rose, Speech on the presentation of the European Civil Rights Prize**

Dear Daniel Libeskind,

Dear President of the Bundestag Bas,

dear Markus Lautenschläger,

dear guests,

It is a special honor for me to welcome you to the award ceremony of the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma here in Berlin, which will be awarded to Daniel Libeskind in this year 2023. The European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma stands in memory of the early beginnings of the civil rights work of Oskar and Vinzenz Rose. In 2008, the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma was awarded for the first time to honor people who have rendered outstanding services to the equal human rights situation of Sinti and Roma. The last recipient of the Civil Rights Award was German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel in 2021.

Today we honor Daniel Libeskind for his important commitment to remembering and commemorating the 500,000 murdered Sinti and Roma in the Holocaust in Nazi-occupied Europe. Daniel Libeskind designed the National Memorial to the Victims of the Holocaust in Amsterdam, which was presented to the Dutch public by King Willem-Alexander and Prime Minister Mark Rutte in 2021. The National Holocaust Memorial in Canada, designed by Daniel Libeskind in 2018, is also dedicated to Jews as well as Sinti and Roma.

Simone Veil, then President of the European Parliament and 2010 winner of the European Civil Rights Prize for Sinti and Roma, said to the Sinti and Roma present at a memorial ceremony in 1979 at the former Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and I quote:

"...one knows that we have suffered together, that we have mourned together our dead who were burned in the crematoria, [...] we know that the ashes of all our parents are united."

Daniel Libeskind, through his design of the monument in Amsterdam, deliberately highlights the commonality of the fate of Sinti and Roma and Jews during the persecution in the Nazi era, and unites them in the memory of the place he created. In Germany, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews by architect Peter Eisenman was opened to the public in Berlin in 2005, and in 2012 the Memorial to the Murdered Sinti and Roma by Dani Karavan, the internationally renowned Israeli artist. With these two monuments, our democratic constitutional state commemorates this inhuman crime of the Holocaust and acknowledges its responsibility to proscribe and counteract the antiziganism and anti-Semitism of today.

Ladies and gentlemen, for us Sinti and Roma, places of remembrance are above all the places where the ashes of our people lie, places where they were murdered, such as the former extermination camps, Auschwitz, Treblinka, Sobibor, Majdanek and Jasenovac, which for us have become the largest cemeteries in Europe. Thus, on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, we commemorate the last 4,300 Sinti and Roma of the German

extermination camp Auschwitz, who were murdered by the SS on the night of August 2 to 3, 1944, despite their fierce resistance. In 2015, the European Parliament declared August 2<sup>nd</sup> as the European Holocaust Remembrance Day for Sinti and Roma. The national monuments are places of remembrance. They appeal to our entire society to keep the unimaginable of the Nazi crimes alive for all of our futures.

Ladies and gentlemen, monuments do not symbolize the transfer of guilt to present and future generations. They stand for the responsibility that falls to all of us - and thus to all of Europe - to recognize, consolidate and preserve the high value of a democratic constitutional state. With concern we observe again in Germany, but also in many other countries in Europe, a new nationalism and a growth of antiziganism and anti-Semitism. This is not only directed against Sinti and Roma and Jewish people. It is a danger for our entire society and threatens our constitutional state and our democracy. Those who fight the rule of law also disregard human rights.

Ladies and gentlemen, remembering in all countries of Europe is so important because remembering is at the same time always a call to resist. As citizens, we all have a responsibility - as do our democratic institutions - to oppose the extreme right-wing and national populist currents in our countries.

Dear Daniel Libeskind, with your artistic work you have made a great contribution to ensuring that the Holocaust of Sinti and Roma is also included in the international sense of responsibility. For your important commitment to proscribing antiziganism and anti-Semitism against the background of history, I would like to express our great appreciation and gratitude to you, dear Mr. Libeskind.

## **Laudatory speech by the President of the Bundestag, Bärbel Bas**

Dear Mr. Rose,

Excellencies,

Dear Dr. Lautenschläger,

Ladies and Gentlemen

and of course

Dear Professor Libeskind

thank you very much for your kind welcome.

Let me emphasize at the beginning of my laudation at this worthy award ceremony: We are all shocked by the Hamas terror - and our thoughts are with the people in Israel. In Germany, we have seen hatred of Israel and Jews on the streets, in schoolyards and on social networks. This glorification of terror is intolerable, especially here in Germany. We need the full force of the rule of law and a united front against anti-Semitism and misanthropy. That is part of the responsibility for our history.

Dear Daniel Libeskind,

You once said, "Memory is the key to all my work."

The preoccupation with the Holocaust runs like a thread through your artistic work. The Holocaust affected your family in a terrible way. Many of your relatives were murdered by the Nazis. Your parents escaped the Germans only through a hardship-filled escape. Despite this painful past, you lived and worked in Germany for many years. This was and is a great fortune for our country.

Your buildings are highlights of architecture in Germany. I am thinking of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, the Felix Nussbaum House in Osnabrück or the Military History Museum in Dresden. To name just a few examples. As an architect, you have created a unique formal language of remembrance. Especially in the monuments you have designed, the memory of National Socialist terror and its victims becomes a physical experience. Anyone who visits the Holocaust Memorial in Amsterdam gets an impression of this. You seem to get lost in a stone labyrinth, walking past the names of 102,000 Dutch Jews and 202 Sinti and Sintize, Roma and Romnja. The names of those murdered by the Nazis during the German occupation. Only from a bird's eye view do the stones signify a shape. They form four Hebrew letters. They mean: in memory.

Dear Daniel Libeskind,

you have also created monuments in Ottawa and Auschwitz that commemorate the Holocaust of European Jews - and the genocide of the Sinti and Roma. With your work, you oppose this forgetting. And you also contribute to the public debate as a committed intellectual. We are gathered here today to thank you for your commitment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The genocide of the Sinti and Roma was not simply "forgotten" after the war. It was ignored and denied, in both parts of Germany. Even worse: the persecution of the Sinti and Roma was sometimes even presented as "justified". Blamed on their alleged way of life. The survivors were further stigmatized and socially marginalized.

Dear Mr. Pfeil,

You were born in the Lublin concentration camp. By good fortune, your family survived, but after liberation you were further marginalized and discriminated against. As a representative of today's Germany, I say: I am deeply ashamed of this. In the course of your life, you always had to experience hostility. Yet you have not lost faith in Germany. You stand up for democracy and against antiziganism. I thank you for that from the bottom of my heart.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It has taken decades for the persecuted and murdered Sinti and Roma to be given a place in our culture of remembrance. Thanks to the struggle of survivors for their rights. Thanks to the struggle of civil rights activists like Romani Rose. And of supporters like Manfred Lautenschläger.

Dear Mr. Rose, dear Mr. Lautenschläger,

Thank you very much for your decades of commitment to human and civil rights. In your struggle for recognition, Sinti and Roma could count on the solidarity of one group in particular: Jewish Holocaust survivors and their descendants. On people like Daniel Libeskind. And people like Franz and Petra Michalsky.

Dear Mrs. Michalsky, dear Mr. Michalsky,

I am delighted that you are here today. Thank you, too, for your commitment to our culture of remembrance. Jews and Sinti and Roma were persecuted by the National Socialists out of the same racial hatred. They are united by a common knowledge: When hatred is directed against a minority, other minorities are not safe either.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very dismayed that even today in Germany antiziganism and anti-Semitism are displayed without restraint - on social networks or in the streets. Recently, the report of the Information Center for Antiziganism made people sit up and take notice. The report describes large numbers of cases of discrimination, hatred and even violence against Sinti and Roma. Antiziganist ways of thinking and behaving can also be found in authorities and government agencies. This is completely unacceptable - and must have consequences. We must oppose antiziganism - just as we must oppose anti-Semitism and every form of misanthropy. We are all challenged: politics, civil society, each and every individual. There can only be a free society if minorities are safe and recognized. When the dignity of every human being is inviolable.

We must fight against the prejudices that still distort the image of Sinti and Roma. We need more education and more unbiased interest in the culture of the Sinti and Roma.

On the occasion of the Memorial Day for the Victims of National Socialism in 2011, Zoni Weiss spoke of the "forgotten Holocaust" before the Bundestag. I wish there had been a change in awareness since then. But recent surveys show: Few people still know that Sinti and Roma were systematically persecuted and murdered under National Socialism. At the same time, many people in Germany claim that our country has dealt with history enough. In part, this speaks of a conscious rejection of our culture of remembrance. That worries me very much. Worse still, there are political forces that reinforce such attitudes. Who are calling for a line to be drawn. Covertly - or even openly.

One thing is clear to me: Only those who credibly commit to a culture of remembrance can assume political responsibility in our country. We owe that to the victims of National Socialism.

Let me quote Daniel Libeskind once again:

"Remembrance is not a matter that we can consider finished at some point; it remains a lifelong, indeed an eternal task."

Dear Daniel Libeskind, thank you for these clear words. And I congratulate you on the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma.

**Speech of the laureate Daniel Libeskind on the occasion of the award of the European Civil Rights Prize of the Sinti and Roma in memory of Oskar and Vinzenz Rose.**

I am deeply honored to be here with you and to receive such an important award. My thanks go to all those involved:

- the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma
- the Manfred Lautenschläger Foundation
- the Documentation and Cultural Center of German Sinti and Roma
- Mrs. Bärbel Bas, President of the German Bundestag

As the son of Holocaust survivors, I grew up under the repression of communism in the desolation of post-war Poland in Lodz, with the consequences of Nazi extermination. My life since then has been marked by war and loss. I remember not only the daily anti-Semitism we faced as children in Poland, but also the bigotry and hatred toward the Sinti and Roma who lived in Lodz as homeless refugees. In the face of great hardship, I was impressed by their love of singing and music. I could not understand how these people could be the target of such clear contempt and hostility; these images are forever etched in my memory.

Early in my career, I vowed to fight the erasure of memory and create architecture with feeling and hope. My goal is to make memory tangible through the experience of light and space. Without the conscious decision to hold on to memory and share our experiences with others, time can insidiously erase everything.

The construction of the Jewish Museum Berlin had an enormous impact on my life and, I hope, on the millions of people who have come to know this building. With the Jewish Museum Berlin, I set out to create space for the others - for the voices of those who were expelled, persecuted, silenced and murdered. These are the voices of the Sinti and Roma - the voices of the "Forgotten Holocaust." An estimated 500,000 people were murdered in the genocide in eastern Poland, the Soviet Union, the Baltic States and Germany. Internment, forced labor, deportation, mass murder, the infamous "Gypsy family camp", Auschwitz-Birkenau - this is the story of hatred and extermination. It's a story I've been able to recognize in many significant monuments and memorials around the world, including the National Holocaust Memorial in Canada's capital, Ottawa.

The memorial is located next to the War Museum and across from the Parliament Buildings. The view of Canada's parliament buildings framed by the memorial is a reminder that atrocities always begin in the halls of government. The design features triangles that refer to the triangular badges worn by Sinti and Roma, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, political prisoners and others. These triangular badges - like the six-pointed star - dehumanized their wearers on their way to death.

The six-pointed star ultimately remains the visual symbol of the Holocaust; for millions of Jews forced to wear it by the Nazis to identify, marginalize, and mark them for extermination. In the Netherlands, I created the Dutch Holocaust memorial with a name



in Amsterdam. For this project, it was important to honor the individual names of Dutch victims of the Holocaust. The memorial bears the names of 102,163 known victims of the Nazis, including Jews and Sinti and Roma, who were persecuted, deported and murdered. Each stone is engraved with the victim's name, date of birth and age at death. The memorial gives these people a burial place and a place to mourn for the first time. In 2018, I worked on the temporary installation "Through the Lens of Faith" at the gates of Auschwitz. One of my collaborators is here with us today, historian Henri Lustiger Thaler. The exhibit, visited by hundreds of thousands, explored how faith carried 21 Auschwitz survivors through the most horrific experiences in the concentration camp: Jews, Sinti and Roma, Polish Catholics.

We are returning to Auschwitz to create a permanent exhibition in Barracks 17. The project will weave together the stories of the Holocaust from Jewish and Sinti and Roma perspectives from the former Yugoslavia, which today includes Serbia, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Croatia. I look forward to bringing this next project to fruition.

Today, as war rages in Ukraine and the Middle East, we see evil repeated. Prejudice and all forms of hatred are on the rise around the world. My commitment to teaching remembrance and hope is more intense than ever.

Today's award is not only about the past, but also about civil rights in today's society. "Never again" is not enough. When I follow the recent election results in Germany, I see the increasing percentage of people who voted for the AfD, and I ask myself: what alternative is being offered to the German people? The alternative is clear to me. It is the license to forget, to bigotry and xenophobia, and to erase the unforgivable crimes against the Jews and the Sinti and Roma from the consciousness of the new generation. The legitimization of this party undermines democracy in Germany.

I have always believed that architecture plays a crucial role in bringing people together, overcoming differences and creating understanding across barriers. It does this with its own unique language. As an architect, I naturally have limited but powerful means to address these inequities: sound, light, materiality. I feel an obligation to create democratic spaces that can inspire people through shared experiences. I believe that architecture cannot remain neutral when it comes to civil rights, it must side with those most in need, immigrants, the homeless and those living in poverty.

Without taking a strong architectural stand for these marginalized populations, we become indifferent to the spaces we relegate them to. This cycle only reinforces the ongoing divisions in our society and gives fuel to populist movements. Truly great architecture is created, sustained and carried into the future by the dreams and hopes of the human spirit. It connects people from the past and present in a shared human experience. And it breaks down the barriers that sometimes separate us from one another.

By rejecting the status quo and working to build a better, more tolerant world - as previous honorees have done - a better future is possible.

Thank you.