

# The speech at ARC 2026 that turned Holocaust memory into a warning for the West

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Rick Ekstein’s ARC 2026 speech is not merely a Holocaust family story. It is a sober warning about what happens when decent people wait for governments, police, universities and media to show courage first. His message is blunt: the West will be defended by ordinary people, or not at all.

**Rick Ekstein’s** speech at ARC 2026 earned a standing ovation because it did something rare in public life: it joined memory to moral obligation. This was not sentimental Holocaust remembrance, nor another vague call for “tolerance”. Ekstein told the story of his mother, Anita, who survived the Holocaust because a Polish Catholic man, Josef Matusiewicz, risked his life to save a Jewish child. He then turned that story into a warning about the West’s present cowardice.

The power of the address lies in its simplicity. Ekstein begins with gratitude to Christians. Without Matusiewicz, he says, his mother would not have lived. Without Oskar Schindler, his Aunt Sally would not have survived. Without them, he would not be standing there. Yad Vashem records Oskar and Emilie Schindler among the Righteous Among the Nations, and the Schindler story remains one of the clearest modern examples of compromised but courageous action in the face of evil.

## Leaders without courage become accomplices.

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But Ekstein's central figure is not Schindler, the famous rescuer. It is Matusiewicz, the ordinary man. According to Ekstein, this Polish Catholic supervisor helped smuggle Anita from the ghetto in a sack of potatoes, hid her, then helped her again after danger closed in. The detail is almost unbearable: an eight-year-old girl hidden in a sack, passed by Nazi guards, later thrown from a second-storey window into snow to escape discovery.

That is why the speech works. Ekstein does not ask his audience to admire courage in the abstract. He makes them look at it in the form of a man with no army, no office, no institutional power and every reason to stay quiet. He then asks whether we, with far less to lose, have become too timid to name evil when it appears.

The contemporary application is pointed. Ekstein warns that violent antisemitism has re-emerged, citing threats and attacks against Jewish communities in Canada, Britain, Europe and Australia. His reference to Manchester is not rhetorical flourish: on 2 October 2025, Yom Kippur, two people were killed in a car and stabbing attack at Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in Manchester, with police treating it as terrorism.

Ekstein's argument is larger than Jewish safety alone.

“Societies that become unsafe for Jews will eventually become unsafe for everybody else.”

That line may be the speech's central thesis. In his telling, antisemitism is not a minority concern but a civilisational warning light. When a society grows comfortable with hatred against Jews, it is already training itself to excuse intimidation, violence and selective law enforcement.

This is where the speech speaks directly to Christians. Ekstein explicitly links Jewish suffering with Christian persecution. He argues that hatred aimed at one community of faith rarely stops there, and urges Jews and Christians to stand with one another. For a Christian audience, the point should land with force. Solidarity with Jews is not political fashion, and it is not uncritical agreement with every Israeli government policy. It is a moral recognition that God's Image in man, religious freedom, and public truth cannot be defended selectively.

There are claims in the speech that should be checked carefully before publication, especially numbers relating to Christian deaths in Africa, church attacks in Canada, and Christian population trends in the Middle East. But the moral burden of the address does not depend on every statistic being beyond dispute. Ekstein's essential claim is harder to evade: laws without enforcement become permission, leaders without courage become accomplices, and ordinary people who wait for permission to speak may wait until it is too late.

The speech ends where it began: with the ordinary man. Matusiewicz did not command a government. He made a costly choice. Ekstein's challenge is that the future of the West may depend on whether enough ordinary people will do the same.