



RAMAPO COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY
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Author to Speak About Her Book, *Tehran Children: A Holocaust Refugee Odyssey*, at Ramapo College

MAHWAH, N.J. – On Thursday, March 12 at noon, Mikhal Dekel, Ph.D., professor of English and comparative literature at the City College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, will speak about her recently published book, *Tehran Children: A Holocaust Refugee Odyssey* (W.W. Norton, 2019). Her talk will be held in the H-Wing Auditorium of Ramapo College under the auspices of The Gross Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies.

Growing up in Israel, Mikhal Dekel knew virtually nothing of her father's past in the Holocaust. He never spoke about his experiences during the war, he had no accent, and no number tattooed on his forearm. Eventually, she discovered that her father was one of a group of Polish-Jewish children who fled Nazi-occupied Poland via Russia, Uzbekistan and Iran, ultimately reaching British-controlled Palestine.

Her quest to uncover her father's past began in 2007, when the Iranian author Salar Abdoh sent her an opinion essay from a Persian newspaper, "Iran, Jews and the Holocaust," that mentioned "what are called the Tehran Children." This led Dekel to traverse the globe in the footsteps of these refugees. Her visits to archives and conversations with people in Uzbekistan, Poland, Russia, Israel and (through a proxy) Iran helped her paint a picture of interlinked and divergent histories, of death and survival, of hospitality and cruelty, and of the politics of twenty-first century memory and historical amnesia.

Dr. Dekel was born in Haifa, Israel. Over the course of seven intense years, she completed her mandatory military service, earned an L.L.B. from Tel Aviv University's Buchmann School of Law, interned at the Tel Aviv State Attorney's Office, and joined the Israel Bar Association before deciding to take a complete break and come to New York. She traveled to regroup and worked odd jobs, and eventually she began a graduate program in English at the City College of New York and then a doctoral program at Columbia University. She now lives in Manhattan with her family, teaches English and comparative literature at the City College and the CUNY Graduate Center, and directs CCNY's Rifkind Center for the Humanities and Arts.

Prior to *Tehran Children*, Mikhal had published two books: *The Universal Jew: Masculinity, Modernity and the Zionist Moment* and the Hebrew monograph *Oedipus be-Kishinev* (Oedipus in Kishinev). The author of numerous scholarly essays, she has received support from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Mellon Foundation and the Lady Davis Foundation, among others.

For information or to request disability-related accommodations for this event, please contact holgen@ramapo.edu or call 201-684-7409.

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Ramapo College of New Jersey is the state's premier public liberal arts college and is committed to academic excellence through interdisciplinary and experiential learning, and international and intercultural understanding. The College is ranked #1 among New Jersey public institutions by College Choice, and is recognized as a top college by *U.S. News & World Report*, *Kiplinger's*, Princeton Review and *Money* magazine, among others. Ramapo College is also distinguished as a Career Development College of Distinction by CollegesofDistinction.com, boasts the best campus housing in New Jersey on Niche.com, and is designated a "Military Friendly College" in Victoria Media's *Guide to Military Friendly Schools*.

Established in 1969, Ramapo College offers bachelor's degrees in the arts, business, data science, humanities, social sciences and the sciences, as well as in professional studies, which include business, education, nursing and social work. In addition, the College offers courses leading to teacher certification at the elementary and secondary levels, and offers graduate programs leading to master's degrees in Accounting, Business Administration, Data Science, Educational Technology, Educational Leadership, Nursing, Social Work and Special Education.