

The Children of the Holocaust

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“To Hitler, children were the enemies. Children are the future, and he wanted to erase all that”. –Tova Friedman a child who survived the Holocaust. Tova was only five and a half. *(pg. 5 Bk 15)*

In WWII the German Nazi Party carried out the mass murder of 6 million people. Among them were over a million Children. The Nazis killed the people they thought should not live in order to create a ‘pure race’. They stole the lives and innocence of children, stripped a race of its humanity and filled their spirits with terror, nightmares and pain. This dark era became known as the Holocaust.

“We did not yet know that our destiny was to be murdered, that our crimes were being Jewish and that our punishment was death”. -Hilde Scheraga was born in Frankfurt Ammain, Germany. Hilde was three years old when Hitler came in to power. *(pg. 7 Bk 15)*

In April 1933 the Nazis ordered a boycott of Jewish Businesses in Germany. On September 15 1935, anti-Semitic discrimination in Germany declared in the Nuremberg laws that Jewish Germans were not citizens.

The Jewish people were humiliated publicly. They were marked, vilified and separated. Their rights and qualities of being a human being was stolen from them. No Mercy was shown. Their voices and cries were lost amongst the gunfire and poison that filled the air. They were left with nothing but silence and pain. Humanity was lost because the Nazis did not see the people they killed as men or women, boys or girls, but low vermin. The children were seen as mere bags of bones. They were seen as a waste of space, energy and money.

At the midst of mass corruption it shows that the Nazi Soldiers lost part of their humanity as well. Humanity in the Collins Dictionary means “the quality of being human; kindness or mercy.” Was Mercy or Kindness shown while they tortured and killed innocent children?

Lucie Adelsberge describes the life of the children: “Without muscles or fat, and the thin skin like pergament scrubbed through and through beyond the hard bones of the skeleton and ignited itself to ulcerated wounds.” *(No. 17)* There small bodies, full of water because of the burning hunger, and again, no mercy was

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shown. Children suffered mentally, physically and emotionally they stomached the pain inflicted upon them.

The children of the Holocaust were put to labour, silenced, hidden or killed. Survivors tolerated the cold and cruel pressure. Pure luck, determination and resilience are combination of factors that enabled them to be here today. Through their survival, they are able to tell us their stories.

At the age of Seven, Bob Narev and his parents were sent to Theresienstadt concentration camp in Czechoslovakia, August 1942. Only he and his mother made it out alive. Bob and his mother immigrated to New Zealand in 1947.

Clare Galambos-Winter (1923-2014) was a young violinist, who was jailed, then sent to Szombathely Ghetto and was later transported to Auschwitz-Birenan. After five weeks Clare and her aunt were enslaved at a munition factory. Clare said “From the horrors of Auschwitz to the hard labour in a munitions factory-my music and I survived. My Family, however, did not.” (No. 15) In 1948 Clare and her aunt both immigrated to New Zealand.

By speaking about their own experience during the Holocaust some survivors felt it as a way of overcoming the horrors of their past. Few still find it impossible to talk about. Survivors like Tova Friedman believe that by speaking about the Holocaust is a way of honouring those who had perished. “By keeping this alive these people have not just disappeared for nothing.” (pg. 57 bk.15)

For many the reason they had endured the pain was in hope and dream that they would see their loved ones again. Vera Egermayer was four years old when she was sent to Terezin alone. However, she was one of the few fortunate enough to be reunited with her family once the war was over. In 1949 they immigrated to Wellington. Yet many were faced with the grim reality that they will never see their loved ones again. Vera was very lucky.

“In Jewish tradition the command to remember, *Zachor* is absolute, but this memory must be accompanied by action of moral and ethical intent. These stories provide a human perspective to the experience of victims. They make the unimaginable tangible. It is up to the reader to draw moral conclusions about a historical event that almost defies understanding.” (NO. 1)

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In the face of great destruction, it is through resilience and survival, glimpse of humanity was never completely lost. “It takes a special brand of resilience to begin again against such odds”. (*No. 16*) Children had to grow up at an early age in order to survive. They demonstrated adaptability and miraculous durability.

Through the stories of the children survivors they teach us tolerance, the importance of freedom, and liberty. By their teachings of tolerance and examples of courageousness we learn to fight for our values and beliefs in order to prevent events like the Holocaust from happening in the future. Discrimination, prejudice and racism divide a nation. But by helping humanity in every way we can and working for unity and peace, allows a nation to live in racial harmony.

These are the lessons that the children of the Holocaust teach us today.

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