

Speech of HE Stefan Krawielicki,
Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany to New Zealand,
on the opening of the travelling exhibition
“Let Me Be Myself - The Life Story of Anne Frank”
at the Nelson Provincial Museum on 1st of July 2021

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou katoa.

Ladies and gentlemen, good evening, shalom and goedenavond.

It is a great honor for me to be part of the opening of the Anne Frank exhibition in Nelson tonight.

Anne Frank accompanied me since I arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand. In October 2019, only two months after I became German Ambassador in Wellington, I was present for the opening of the Anne Frank exhibition in Foxton. And just two weeks ago, I participated in the inauguration of the Anne Frank Memorial in Wellington, followed by an Anne Frank Charity dinner.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Deputy Mayor of Nelson, Judene Edgar, for her speech and for everything you, the Mayor Her Worship Rachel Reese and the Nelson City Council as well as the Nelson Provincial Museum – and many others – have done to make this exhibition happen.

Further, I would like to thank Boyd Klap for all of the amazing and incredible work he has done for this exhibition, together with the Holocaust Centre of New Zealand. Dear Boyd, for years you tirelessly invested your time and energy for the Anne Frank exhibition to be set up, to be sponsored and travel around Aotearoa New Zealand.

Since then, this exhibition has had a very long lasting success, also because Anne Frank's diary and this exhibition have a *message* that remains strong. A *strong message*, especially in the face of today's antisemitism, intolerance, discrimination, prejudice, racism, hate speech, bullying and exclusion of all forms. These are evils that unfortunately still exist and remain contagious, evils against which all of us have to stand up and fight.

To add to what the previous speakers have already said I would like to share only two aspects or two thoughts with you.

The first is about the *success* of Anne Frank's diary.

Thanks to this roving exhibition, I – like many people – have been thinking a bit more about why Anne Frank's diary still touches so many around the world. Yes, it was translated into more than 70 languages (including Te Aro Maori), but why has it been so successful, and why does it remain so successful even today, more than 70 years later?

I think that when it comes to the Holocaust, it is all about: never again.

And never again means: never forget.

And never forget means: commemoration and education.

So it is all about education – and therefore about young people.

But the question is: How do we *reach* young people? How do we *connect with them*?

Whenever I hear from young people about what stuck with them when they learned about the Holocaust, usually it is when they sat down and listened to eye witnesses. But very few have the privilege of having a firsthand conversation with a Holocaust survivor. To a certain extent, reading Anne Frank's diary is as close as it gets to sitting down and talking to an eyewitness. Anne Frank is a young girl speaking to other young people through her diary, recounting the horrors she witnessed in a touching and timeless way. This is why it maybe is easy for young girls and boys, who are about the same age as Anne Frank, to identify with her and to understand the small everyday problems and joys she writes about. By identifying with her and understanding her, young people may have the feeling that Anne Frank is directly talking to them when she writes about the nightmare she is going through.

This would be my approach in trying to understand, or at least *better* understand, Anne Frank's diary's continued success.

The second aspect that I would like to share with you is about coincidence.

As some of you probably know, it was pure coincidence that this diary was not destroyed. When the Nazis arrested Anne Frank's family and the others who were hiding with them, she could not take the diary with her and it fell on the floor. A family friend grabbed it, saved it from confiscation, and – after the war – handed it over to Anne Frank's father who was the only surviving member of the Frank family.

If her diary had been destroyed, we would probably know only very little or maybe even nothing about the Jewish families who had been hiding in this one house in Amsterdam for more than two years. And the world certainly would not know Anne Frank so very well.

This is why her diary does not only give us the opportunity to learn about Anne Frank's life for the length of a book. It also serves as a heart wrenching reminder of the thousands – and maybe tens of thousands – of diaries which were destroyed or never even discovered. Diaries with memories, and stories, and nightmares, but also hopes and dreams that we will never have the privilege of reading.

Anne Frank's diary also stands for the millions of victims who could not write down their stories which therefore remain forever untold.

This is why I believe that when we read Anne Frank's diary, we also ought to understand that this diary which – by chance – survived, has somehow taken over the difficult task to not only tell Anne Frank's story, but also to speak in the name of the thousands of diaries that were lost, hidden or destroyed – as well as in the name of the millions of diaries that were never written.

Kia ora, thank you very much.

I now declare the Anne Frank exhibition in Nelson open.