

*Speak Up and Make a Difference*

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I had never pondered deeply about the Holocaust and how hatred and ignorance affects a community as a whole until I watched your moving interview. At school when we reviewed words like prejudice or antisemitism, I could give a perfect definition of the words without understanding their true meaning. When you mentioned the humiliation and degradation of the Orthodox Jews in Bialystok, Poland, I got a glimpse of what you went through. Each incident you tell us about made me wonder why human beings do such harm to each other. You talk of the Polish boys laughing at you as you walked by, and I thought of how I too hate the feeling of others making fun of me, but it was so much more difficult for you. Your description of children crying, separated from their mothers, is vivid. In my mind's eye, I could see their terror, the chaos of people running, trying to escape from the Nazis. No child should have to go through that, and I feel very sad for all the children who could not make it.

Your desperate need to find your family members and stay alive showed how courageous you were in your effort to survive. The way you had to stand barefoot on the frozen ground, the beatings you bore, and all the other evil acts that you experienced made me think of the horrors of Auschwitz, Stutthof, and Ravensbrueck. Merely reading about this did not give as much perspective as listening to your experiences did. I do

believe that we should never take freedom for granted, and that we should fight injustice everywhere, be it in our community or in far away Darfur.

Another incident that you narrated touched me deeply. You talk of when you saw your aunt dying and you could not give her a drink of water or a morsel of food, and how helpless you felt. I thought of how often I take most things for granted—food, my family, my home. I never stop to think about the millions of people who are starving in the world as I go about my daily life. When I learned of all you went through at such a young age, I admired your strength and determination of so many challenges. The way you scratched off a bit of paint to put on your mother's cheeks to make her look younger could have resulted in your hanging, but your courage and spirit prevailed.

Before I heard your interview, I thought my heroes were athletes or celebrities, but now I know that ordinary people like you can show extraordinary courage in times of peril and are true heroes. Earlier, in school, when one kid was being bullied by several people, I would never interfere, but now I realize that I cannot always remain quiet and must speak up. Your experience has changed the way I view injustice today and I hope I can make a difference as well.