

## Question #2

Many Holocaust survivors tell their stories to whoever will listen. I feel that it is their obligation to do so to inform the world of the prevalence of genocide and to obviate it with the hope of a peaceful future. I also believe that it is our generation's obligation to listen to survivors' stories, to try and relate to them and help the world in the complicated process of tolerance for other religions and ideas. The survivors' stories help heal the wounds of the past, and we must retell them to shape a future void of anti-Semitism, intolerance, and hatred.

The survivors often share their pasts in the form of narratives or testimonials, such as those seen on University of Southern California Shoah Foundation Institute's *iWitness* website, or on video display at many memorial museums. After Steven Spielberg's horrifying film, *Schindler's List*, numerous survivors were encouraged to visit classrooms and local libraries in their towns and communities. They aim to teach this generation tolerance, along with the strong moral conviction to confront and immediately destroy hatred of any kind.

Jakob Kryszek, born in Poland in 1918, survived five different concentration camps, including Auschwitz. He was shot in the leg, and while forced to continue working, made himself splints and bandages. He says he tells his story to promote the concept of "never again," and for others to "learn what happened in that situation." Max R. Garcia, a survivor from Amsterdam, hid from the Nazis until he was caught, arrested, and sent to Auschwitz. He began to tell his story when he saw the first movie about concentration camps in 1979. They featured lockers for personal belongings, freedom to meet with relatives, and sanitary hygiene facilities. Disgusted by offensive inaccuracies, he began to work with the Holocaust Center in San Francisco, telling his story to clarify the horrors of the Holocaust and to educate the ignorant. Priscilla Alden Thwaites Garcia wrote a book of his stories as they were told to her, called

*Auschwitz, Auschwitz... I Cannot Forget You, As Long as I Remain Alive.* Gloria Hollander Lyon, a survivor originally from Czechoslovakia, remembers when she made the decision to share her story with the world. She received a brochure in the mail, claiming that the Holocaust was a hoax. Shaken, she realized her obligation to share her story, and now speaks frequently about her time spent in Auschwitz-Birkenau, Bergen-Belsen, Beendorf, and Ravensbrück.

While there are survivors who prefer to share oral testimonies, there are those who prefer writing in the form of novels and poems, such as Elie Wiesel, the author of *Night, Day, and Dawn*. Wiesel chose to write novels because he felt he must “bear witness” to these horrible events, and ensure that they never happen again. Others share their stories in an art form, such as Claire Boren, a child Holocaust survivor. She creates masterpieces based on the bits and pieces she remembers, and her work serves the dual purpose of providing her with a coping mechanism. She says, “All of a sudden, I was dealing with my past and talking about it...it has promoted a kind of healing, and I realize I am not alone with my memories.”

As real and compelling as are the stories of survivors, there are those who fight viciously to deny that the Holocaust ever transpired. They are termed “Holocaust deniers,” and both survivors and their listeners must work to thwart their efforts. They strongly believe that the Holocaust, and the massacre of six million Jews, never took place. An infamous figure of this theology is Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, the former Iranian president, who claims that the Holocaust is false, and simply fabricated in order to achieve the state of Israel. Austria, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland have all banned the theology of Holocaust denial. The punishment for this crime ranges from six months to a year imprisonment. By passing on the survivor’s stories, our generation can work to issue the ban of

Holocaust denial everywhere, because it is potentially a horrifying future if the theology becomes widespread.

Holocaust deniers wish to rid Jews of the state of Israel, which is now supported by the survivors' testimonies. It is estimated that in roughly twenty-five years, there will be an absence of Holocaust survivors in the world. Therefore, it is our generation's obligation to listen to the stories and understand the true importance of Israel: the safety, protection, and freedom of a Jewish state. The survivors' stories tell of a time without Israel, and the dangers of an oppressive society. They speak about the impact of hatred on the world, and the people it destroys. As Rabbi Jonathan Sacks stated in his article "Never Again," published February 2015 in *The Wall Street Journal*, "We must listen and heed the survivor in Auschwitz this week when he said, 'I don't want to be here again' --for that is the end of the road that begins in hate." By listening to these stories, one can understand the need for a Jewish state, intended to ensure the continuation of the Jewish people. It is the Holocaust survivors' obligation to tell their stories, and convey this vital message, and it is our obligation to carry it into the future.

The Holocaust survivors' stories affect me personally. Several of my family members perished in Auschwitz: Daniel Caplan (1870-1943); Jacob Caplan (1903-1943); Solly Caplan (1908-1943); and Hertze Caplan (1913-1943). They are no longer alive to tell their stories. However, listening to the testimonies of other's stories has helped me recognize their traumatizing experiences, and relate to them in a way I was never able to before. Although I cannot physically speak with them, I feel that by listening to other's stories, I am able to pass on their memories and reinforce Elie Wiesel's "never again": never should a Holocaust happen again.