

Memory and Legacy

By Samara Cohen

Gerda Weissmann Klein lived with her mother, father, and brother in the Bielsko ghetto. On her birthday, her mother threw her a party. She was given an orange as her present, which was bought with the money her mother had from leaving the ghetto and selling a diamond and pearl ring. That was the last birthday gift she received from her parents. Her family was later separated into different camps and she was liberated after a death march.

I have grown up in a loving family like Gerda. I was never really taught about the Holocaust until recently and I have never experienced or even imagined the suffering that she and millions have gone through. I heard her testimony and I was moved by the love her family felt for each other. The fact that people were selfless in a time of darkness made me feel a sense of faith in humanity. To think that her family was to be torn apart by hatred snaps me back into the cold reality of the world.

Hatred has been present throughout history, is present today and sadly will still be around in centuries from now. I hear stories of the death camps and process the information, but I know I will never truly understand the pain of those in the Holocaust.

The only thing that separates us from the torturers is our compassion. Our sense of right and wrong that leads us to take action against those who have strayed. Many have learned nothing from this sad time in history. All around the world people inflict pain on others, physically and emotionally, they cause destruction that affects others, themselves and our Earth. In North Korea, the citizens are starved. In the Middle East, the police pretend not to see a crime. Bangladesh has the highest rate of human trafficking in the world. War rages around me and I ask myself if I will ever do anything to contribute to ending it. People just as cruel as the ones who are causing hurt turn a blind eye and I hope I am not one of those people. I hope not just for myself but for others that when it really comes down to it I will not be weak, I will not be selfish, I will be like those who have fought for the love of their families against the ever constant oppression of the world.

I hope, like the testimonies of those of the Holocaust have inspired me, that in writing this I have inspired you.