

1 PAULA DASH REMEMBERS.

2 My name is Paula Dash, I'm a survivor of  
3 the Holocaust. I was born in Lodz, Poland. Lodz is  
4 the second largest city next to Warsaw, which is the  
5 capital of Poland. There was a population of 700,000  
6 in our city, one-third of whom were Jews. The war  
7 started on a Friday, September 1, 1939. I remember  
8 that morning very well. The Polish radio announced,  
9 and I remember the exact words, of course in Polish,  
10 and it said "Attention, attention. Today at 5:00  
11 o'clock A.M. our eternal enemy trespassed our  
12 borders." We all jumped out of the beds and we looked  
13 frightened at each other and it didn't take much to  
14 realize there is a war, a war by Nazis against Jews.

15 Our city was located fairly close to the  
16 German border so in a few days they were there. I  
17 remember seeing them coming in on motorcycles, on  
18 tanks, jeeps in green, black and brown uniforms. The  
19 Nazis picked the tallest, like six footers and over,  
20 to occupy a city to make it look more scary. And of  
21 course they didn't waste one minute of their time and  
22 right away they started up rounding up Jews on the  
23 streets in large numbers, send them away, and they  
24 never saw their families again and their families

1 never knew what happened to them. Those who returned  
2 home were severely beaten, bleeding from their eyes,  
3 mouth, ears, swollen faces beyond recognition. There  
4 was a great fear in the air and we knew what lays  
5 ahead for us, namely, the Nazis are going to carry  
6 out their master plan and that is exterminate the  
7 Jews.

8           They burst into Jewish homes without  
9 warning, took out some members of the families and  
10 shot them right there to death on the spot. That was  
11 only, you might say, the first few days since they  
12 came in. Little did we know that we are in for this  
13 hell for several more years to come. Every day they  
14 had new laws for us like now we couldn't use public  
15 transportation anymore, we were not allowed to walk  
16 on the sidewalks, men had to tip their hats if they  
17 saw a Nazi passing by. That was if the Nazi didn't  
18 shoot the men first. We had to turn in our valuables  
19 like furs, jewelry, radios and so on. If they  
20 suspected somebody that didn't turn it in, he was  
21 called to the CRIPPO, which was short for criminal  
22 police, and was tortured there for days. Sometimes  
23 he never returned home. His clothes then were sent  
24 to the families with a letter that he committed

1 suicide. We knew that wasn't so. The people were  
2 tortured there to death. Now we had to wear a yellow  
3 Star of David like in the front and in the back with  
4 the word "JUDE" in big black letters. There is one  
5 Star of David displayed in the JCC, those of you who  
6 want to view it. Probably somebody smuggled it out  
7 of the ghetto.

8 Now there were new announcements for us --  
9 everything went quick, quick, quick, quick -- that we  
10 will have to leave our homes and move into a ghetto  
11 which is being prepared for us. For this the Nazis  
12 picked the slummiest area of broken windows and  
13 broken doors and in a short time we had to go to the  
14 ghetto. Our family consisted of six people and we  
15 were assigned a room 12 by 14. We could only take  
16 the most important things like a little clothes, a  
17 few blankets and a few pots and pans and that was  
18 all.

19 In a short time the Nazis closed the  
20 ghetto. That was, they put barbed wire around it,  
21 and that wasn't enough for them yet so they had armed  
22 guards around the ghetto with German Shepherd dogs on  
23 the outside. The conditions in the ghetto were very,  
24 very, very bad, horrible. We had no running water.

1 For a bucket of water we had to walk about four or  
2 five blocks and there we had to stay in line for it  
3 because there were hundreds and hundreds of people  
4 for water. Now they took away food from us and gave  
5 us a ration every 10 days. It consisted of an eighth  
6 of a loaf of bread -- there were round breads in the  
7 ghetto, this was cut in four and then in eighths -- A  
8 little piece, little bit of yellow sugar, two or  
9 three potatoes and a little salt and that was it.  
10 The piece of bread people ate up as soon as they came  
11 home with it and we had to go on for nine more days  
12 until the next ration came out. Naturally a big high  
13 percentage of starvation set in and people from  
14 hunger just swell up and fell on the streets dead.

15 Practically everybody now had swollen  
16 faces, bags under their eyes and this was called the  
17 ghetto sickness. People first swell up to their  
18 ankles and the swelling went up higher and higher so  
19 that they couldn't stand on their feet so quite  
20 naturally they had to stay in bed, and I want you to  
21 know whoever went sick in bed in the ghetto never,  
22 never got up alive, just stayed there until the  
23 swelling advanced to the heart and that was the end  
24 of it.

1           My father was a victim of this horrible  
2           sickness, he died of starvation, a man who was never  
3           sick a day in his life, he died at the age of 52.  
4           That was already the year of 1942. Families kept on  
5           decreasing now. Shortly after my dad's death my  
6           sister was caught on the street and deported to  
7           Treblinka death camp where she was put in crematorium  
8           at the age of 17. Shortly after, my brother, age 18,  
9           was caught and deported to Auschwitz, later to  
10          Buchenwald where he was shot on the death march two  
11          days before the liberation. Now we are three people  
12          left in the family. The population in the ghetto has  
13          gotten very, very small now. There was not one  
14          family now where members were not missing.

15                 There was a hospital in the ghetto. One  
16          day the Nazis burst in there and took the sick people  
17          out of their beds and threw them out of the windows.  
18          Yes, they threw them out of the windows. It was  
19          raining, raining with people. And what do you think  
20          happened to them? They landed on the sidewalk dead  
21          and there was a sea of blood for a long time until  
22          Mother Nature washed it away, the rain.

23                 After that they caught some people and hung  
24          them in the streets so everybody could view it. They

1 were hanging there for weeks. It was winter now of  
2 1943, bitter, bitter cold. People were dying from  
3 cold and hunger now. The rations became smaller and  
4 smaller. The Nazis took away the two or three  
5 potatoes from us and we had to eat potato peels and  
6 in a short time the peels too stopped (UNCLEAR WORD).

7 Under those horrible inhuman conditions we were  
8 living in the ghetto and every day that passed by, it  
9 was a miracle that we were still alive because every  
10 day there were deportations and deportations.

11 In the meantime though we found out what  
12 happened to all those deported people. As these  
13 people arrived in the cattle wagons to their  
14 destination, and there were hundreds and hundreds of  
15 people there to be killed, the ones who were still in  
16 the wagons saw what's happening to those way in the  
17 front of them so they jotted a few words -- they had  
18 a pencil and a piece of paper. And they saw that all  
19 people are being killed, shot in the back of their  
20 head and thrown in the pit that was dug for them  
21 prior to their arrival by other Jews and so they  
22 wrote "Do not go. They are killing us one by one."  
23 The notes then, several of them, were stuffed in the  
24 cracks of the wagons and as the wagons returned to

1 the ghetto, the people who cleaned them found the  
2 notes and actually word has gotten around and this  
3 way we knew what happened to them, although we knew  
4 it but this way we were sure of it.

5           Moreover, as the people were shot, there  
6 were special squads of people who have to take off  
7 their clothes of the corpses and the clothes were  
8 sent back into the ghetto to sort the clothes. Many  
9 people recognized dresses, pants and shoes of the  
10 ones of their loved ones and some of the clothes were  
11 drenched, still drenched in blood. The place where  
12 these atrocities happened is called Chelmno,  
13 C H E L M N O. It is about 60 kilometers north of  
14 Lodz and about 25 to 30 kilometers south of Gdansk.

15           Then one day they decided to deport  
16 children and they called it "Kinder Accion" which  
17 means children's action. They went to each yard --  
18 in our city we had big apartment houses, six, seven,  
19 eight and nine stories and over. In the courtyard --  
20 there was a big, big courtyard in each house -- they  
21 went in about 8 or 10 in different color uniforms and  
22 demanded the children. Mothers and fathers came out  
23 of their apartments and handed the children over to  
24 those murderers. In front of the building on the

1 street there were trucks waiting, big, big, trucks  
2 covered with canvas. The children were loaded on the  
3 trucks, they were packed full, full, full to capacity  
4 and driven away. The Germans said that the bullet is  
5 too expensive for a Jewish child so they found  
6 another solution. They burned them alive.

7 The Nazis now almost completed their master  
8 plan and it was the year of 1944 and and new  
9 announcements were posted on the walls in the ghetto  
10 and it said that they are working towards dissolving  
11 the ghetto. Dissolve, we knew what it meant in  
12 German language, it meant kill, exterminate. Then  
13 one day in August 1944 we, that is, the three in the  
14 family, my mother, my youngest brother and I, were  
15 taken to a train station, stuffed in cattle wagons  
16 and destination unknown. The conditions in these  
17 cattle wagons were just indescribable. It was  
18 stuffy, full of people, children were crying, some  
19 people were fainting, some people were dying. We had  
20 no food, no water. After a day and a night going  
21 like this we arrived at 2:00 o'clock A.M. in a place  
22 known as Auschwitz. Here another tragedy started.  
23 As the doors opened the Nazis were waiting for us and  
24 shouted "Alla rous" which means everybody out. Right



1 there women were separated from men, children were  
2 yanked out of their mother's arms and given to older  
3 women. Nobody could ask nor say anything about  
4 anything. About 100 feet ahead of us was the very,  
5 very big gate, the entrance to the big death factory  
6 called Auschwitz. We proceeded toward it very, very,  
7 very slowly. As we came through, there were a bunch  
8 of very, very husky Nazis, you might have heard of  
9 Mengele between them, they were standing like this  
10 from one end to another, looked us over -- as I  
11 mentioned before, it was the middle of the night --  
12 with big flashlights, sent my mother to the left,  
13 sent me to the right, and now I'm only one of six  
14 people because left meant the gas chamber. At the  
15 time I didn't know it yet. We were standing there  
16 all night and in the morning we were taken to  
17 showers. We had to walk around naked in front of  
18 hundreds of Gestapo Nazis. After the shower they  
19 shaved our hair. We were just numb. We didn't even  
20 think what's happening to us. One thing was clear to  
21 us. We are not going to survive that.

22 After they shaved our hair we couldn't  
23 recognize one another. We stopped looking like human  
24 beings. From now on even our name was taken away and

1 we were given a number. Since it was already late in  
2 1944 and the Germans kept on losing the war on the  
3 Russian front, they didn't want to lose time of  
4 tattooing us because everybody that was in Auschwitz  
5 was tattooed. Heinrich Himmler said to work swiftly  
6 and get the hell rid of us and swiftly they were. We  
7 then were given clothes, if you can call it that.  
8 The clothes were from dead people and just one layer,  
9 just a dress, no shoes, nothing. Now we had to run  
10 to the barracks. We had to run, not walk, barefoot,  
11 on the gravel to the barracks. In the barracks were  
12 hundreds and hundreds of bunk beds, three rows, three  
13 tiers, we had no blankets, just on the raw board with  
14 plenty of splinters in them, 14 girls in one bunk  
15 bed. You can imagine that no one could get to sleep  
16 there. In the morning we found girls next to us dead  
17 and in the process of dying. They were taken away  
18 by special squad people who were working day and  
19 night at this particular job.

20 If one had to go to the bathroom, one  
21 couldn't just go like that. We had to wait until  
22 they had about 100 people or so. Then they marched  
23 us to the bathrooms. There were several hundred  
24 people waiting there already. There were Nazis, all

1 of them, lots of them had wooden sticks and hit us  
2 over the head, shoulders, feet. It was a real, real  
3 hell which indicated more and more that soon we are  
4 going to be finished off. The gas chambers were  
5 working without letup day and night. So after a few  
6 days of this torture our turn came. One afternoon we  
7 were taken to the front of the ovens and we had to  
8 disrobe and we were sitting on a big, big field all  
9 afternoon and all night waiting to be gassed in the  
10 morning. We saw the smoke coming out without a  
11 letup. Our brains did not work at all.

12 In addition to that, the Nazi women who  
13 were our guards kept on reminding us that tomorrow  
14 morning we will be smoking out of this chimney. It  
15 was the beginning of September and the nights in  
16 Europe are quite cold and so we were sitting very  
17 close to each other so one could keep warm. Nothing  
18 went through our heads.

19 The morning came and with it a miracle came  
20 along. Somewhere in a labor camp they needed 300  
21 girls for work, hard labor work. They then had to  
22 pick 7- or 800 to make a selection again. Now they  
23 weren't looking for old. Here everybody was young.  
24 But they were looking for something else, namely for

1 a little scratch, a little mark, a little pimple,  
2 whatever, and again they looked us over in the nude.  
3 Everybody had to open even their mouths to see if we  
4 had all our teeth or I don't know what they were  
5 looking for, but I was among 300 to be sent to a  
6 labor camp and not to be gassed. And again they gave  
7 us clothes again from dead people, just one layer of  
8 it, and again to cattle wagons and destination  
9 unknown.

10 We were driving a day and a night, arrived  
11 to a city named Bremen. There we were assigned to  
12 barracks with two in one bunk bed. There were 15  
13 such bunk beds in a room, if you call it a room.  
14 There was sand on the floor. We worked as hard  
15 laborers in the street carrying heavy loads of  
16 bricks, poles, digging ditches and so on. We were  
17 beaten by the Nazis mercilessly. There were orders  
18 to kill several of us every day and so they did  
19 exactly that.

20 Every day less girls came back from work  
21 than went in the morning. We had to wake up at 4:00  
22 in the morning. We were picked up by big trucks and  
23 brought us back at night. At night we get a little  
24 water with soup and a little piece of bread and that

1 was all until the next night, nothing in the morning  
2 going to work. Many of our girls lost their life  
3 there. Under those horrible conditions we were there  
4 until February, and since Bremen is located in the  
5 northwestern part of Germany and the Allied Forces  
6 were coming closer and closer from the west, the  
7 Nazis had orders to evacuate us and again from  
8 Himmler. And the order came and it said, and I'm  
9 almost quoting his words, and it said "Surrender is  
10 out of question. The camp has to be evacuated  
11 immediately. No prisoner is to be given alive in the  
12 hands of the enemy," meaning the Allies. And so the  
13 Nazis evacuated the camp and took us more east away  
14 from the western border. This was called the Death  
15 March.

16 Two weeks under heavy bombardment and many,  
17 many dead who fell on the way from hunger and thirst,  
18 we arrived to a big death camp and the name was  
19 Bergen-Belsen. We also arrived there at night. It  
20 was the end of march. As the gate of this death camp  
21 opened and as we looked around, around the Nazi  
22 guards that brought us all of a sudden disappeared  
23 evidently just they let us go in there and they went  
24 off somewhere forever. But we were under other

1 murderers and for us it didn't make any difference  
2 one way or the other. It was a very, very dark night  
3 and there was no light whatsoever, not in the  
4 barracks and not anyplace. The heavy bombardment  
5 went on and on and we could only see light when it  
6 lit up in the sky from the bombardment. The Nazis  
7 pushed us in the barracks in the dark. They didn't  
8 even talk. They whispered and pushed us into a  
9 barrack already full, full, full of people. So we  
10 just stopped and stepped on the people and it was a  
11 chaos. The Nazis then closed the door and there were  
12 several hundred people stuffed together where it was  
13 pitch dark and stuffy. Quite naturally there were  
14 screams and yells and it is impossible to describe  
15 what was going on in there. Some people were lying  
16 on the floor and couldn't get up. The ones who were  
17 standing were standing on one leg because there were  
18 no place for the other leg to put down.

19 As the cries and chaos went on and the  
20 Nazis wanted us to be quiet so they opened the doors  
21 and spilled several hundred of boiling water on us  
22 and indeed it quieted down because almost half of the  
23 people died instantly.

24 Well, the night passed on this way and in

1 the morning as we went outside, oh, my God, what we  
2 saw, mountains and mountains and mountains of dead  
3 bodies, many of them so deteriorated with green pus  
4 coming out of the bodies, some of them without eyes,  
5 thousands upon thousands of young bodies. There were  
6 girls sitting out there next to the dead bodies but  
7 since they were moving, we realized that those were  
8 still alive. So we talked to them, some of them from  
9 our city and from our neighborhood that we had missed  
10 for a long time. We asked them how long are you here  
11 and how long are you here. One said three months and  
12 one said two months. They were also sent from other  
13 camps. But it is coming to an end they said. "Don't  
14 you see," pointing out to the mountains of dead, "do  
15 you know who this one is and that one with her arm  
16 hanging down and this one? A few days ago they were  
17 alive just like you and I. This here is  
18 Bergen-Belsen, here everybody gets poisoned by being  
19 with the dead people and you get the disease called  
20 typhus and that's that. Here you do not work hard  
21 labor, here you die."

22 The mountains of dead people were lying all  
23 over the camp, people fell dead just walking. The  
24 Nazis almost completed their plan. Lice beseiged us,

1 the stench from the dead people constantly in our  
2 throats. Every morning lots of dead people were  
3 pulled out of the barracks. Everybody was waiting  
4 for their next, next. We all were dying slowly and  
5 surely. Transports of people kept on arriving every  
6 day and every night. The air was poisoned from the  
7 dead. There were thousands, tens of thousands of  
8 them. We got no food there, no water, no bath, no  
9 place to sleep. We were just walking around looking  
10 100 percent inhuman in rags, no shoes, no hair. We  
11 didn't look like normal people at all. Then one day  
12 we noticed the Nazis are wearing white bands on their  
13 sleeves. Of course we didn't know what it meant.  
14 For us every change meant our death, our end. Little  
15 did we know that the days for them were numbered as  
16 the Allied Forces were moving in with full force.

17 Now what to do with the thousands of  
18 corpses that are around us all over. Naturally the  
19 Nazis wanted to leave no trace of their atrocities so  
20 they brought in men from other sections, rounded up a  
21 great number of our girls and made us dig a huge hole  
22 -- also they brought in bulldozers too for that  
23 purpose -- and I don't know how long the digging took  
24 but in no time there was a huge, huge hole like you



1 can see they are digging here for the Metro. This is  
2 now the mass grave in Bergen-Belsen for these young  
3 beautiful people and I was an eyewitness and I saw it  
4 being dug from scratch. Now they needed people to  
5 throw the corpses in and to fill the grave. This  
6 view was the most terrible, horrible view one could  
7 ever, ever imagine. They, the Nazis, gave the men  
8 little strings, pieces of rags, so they could tie it  
9 around an arm, neck or leg of the corpse so they  
10 could drag them from each place to the big grave and  
11 throw them in, untie the string and go again and  
12 again for other corpses, drag them to the grave and  
13 so on and so on.

14 There were lines and lines of people, you  
15 might say living dead people, dragging dead dead  
16 people. There was not much difference between them.  
17 This view I also personally eyewitnessed and I'm sure  
18 that as much as I'm trying to explain and make myself  
19 clear, I don't think that anybody who wasn't there  
20 could ever imagine that this took place in the 20th  
21 Century. I saw it and so did many of us, how men who  
22 dragged the dead people and who were almost dead  
23 themselves opened the corpse with just a little slit  
24 in the front, took out some of the insides and ate

1 it. I saw it. He then was kicked and beaten by the  
2 Nazis to death and it didn't take much to kill him  
3 and he then was dragged to the grave and thrown in  
4 there.

5           There were many of those that were thrown  
6 in the grave still being warm that could be saved. I  
7 can say it with a full heart, I saw it with my own  
8 eyes. As this was going on I started to feel sick,  
9 having pains in my stomach, vomiting and dizziness.  
10 I couldn't stand on my feet anymore which meant that  
11 I was stricken with the disease. I went to a pit on  
12 the other section that was dug by the Nazis because  
13 they were still building new barracks for the  
14 oncoming people. I put myself in there wanting and  
15 waiting to die. My friends, the girls, noticed my  
16 disappearance and came to me and pulled me out of  
17 there by force because I didn't and I didn't want and  
18 I couldn't get up. I also was running a high  
19 temperature. The girls succeeded and managed to pull  
20 me out of there, four of them. That was April 14,  
21 1945. The next day, April 15, we were liberated by  
22 the British armed forces. I was still very ill and  
23 wouldn't believe it. I believed that the Nazis are  
24 pulling another trick on us but when I heard an

1 announcements on the microphone in Yiddish and  
2 English and it said "Ir vate fry" which means you are  
3 free, I believed it then.

4 I could stay here for years and years and  
5 tell you facts and facts and facts after facts and I  
6 don't think that I would ever finish and I thank you  
7 very much for listening.

8 Dorothy, I want to show you, this is what i  
9 have when I walked in the Nazi to Bremen.

10 SPEAKER: You mean in Lodz?

11 DASH: No, in the camps. I held it here in  
12 my bosom. This was my towel. This was my  
13 everything.

14 SPEAKER: You brought it from home?

15 DASH: Something that I brought from the  
16 camps, from the concentration camp. We were frisked  
17 every day, they never found this. Then when we were  
18 working in Bremen on the streets on bombed out  
19 houses, we were cleaning it, we went into one of the  
20 basements and this was a curtain there that the Nazis  
21 had left, the people had left and they ran away, they  
22 were scared of the bombings. I pulled it down and  
23 folded it, full of holes. This is probably 45 years  
24 old and I folded it. During the day it was in my

1 bosom. In the morning it was a towel because with  
2 coffee we washed our eyes, just our eyes because we  
3 stood up, we got up at 4:00 o'clock in the morning.  
4 They frisked us every day and they never found this.  
5 After the liberation we were living in camps and in  
6 the soldiers quarters and so this was a table cloth  
7 for me. This was all I had, the table cloth, and I'm  
8 carrying this around and mending it every, wherever  
9 it is torn and this is what goes with me.

10 SPEAKER: You will never give it up?

11 DASH: No. Still the OBERSCHAFFER (ph.),  
12 the MAG (ph.), gave me a piece of soap (YIDDISH  
13 PHRASE) made out of Jewish fat. This and this I'm  
14 carrying around with me all the time.

15 (TEXT ON SCREEN) Paula Dash, (maiden name  
16 Paula Garfinkle) was born in Lodz, Poland on December  
17 3, 1920. She was confined in the Lodz ghetto from  
18 from early 1940 to August 1944, after which she was  
19 transported to the Auschwitz Birkenau concentration  
20 camp at the age of 23. Later, she was selected for  
21 forced labor in Bremen. The death march brought her  
22 to Bergen-Belsen in march 1945. Paula was liberated  
23 by the British army on April 15, 1945. She came to  
24 the United States on June 1, 1951 and has been a

1 resident of the Baltimore and Washington, D.C.

2 Area. END OF TAPE.

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