

I'm Minda Jaffe. Today we are interviewing Mimi Ormond, a Holocaust survivor. The project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.

Mimi, we were talking before about your arrival in the United States, some of the different cities you lived in when you first came here, when you began to feel just a little bit more ingrained within the country. You said it was in St. Louis.

Now I want to ask you about some of your feelings about some of the things that occurred. You can describe to me some things that occurred and some of your feelings, or some of your feelings based on whatever occurred that you don't wish necessarily to describe. But I know you have a lot of strong feelings about some things, about your children, about some of your relatives, about some of your own rootings here in this country, and about what happened and why and how. I'd like you to tell us about it.

Well, my main feeling, I think, if you want to put it all in one term, although it might be very irrational, is guilt. You know, you feel how come all these people died and you survived.

[CRYING]

That's foolish. I was only a child. But you think all the children in my hometown that were my age died. That's something that you just live with. Excuse me.

I think that's the main feeling that I have. Through this guilt, I also feel that that's why I wanted to be part of this project is that people should not forget and that this has happened in humanity, which is so irrational.

It didn't happen with a bunch of savages. It happened in a place in the center of Europe, with educated people, with people that seemed to have a culture and a background that didn't seem as inhumane people. Overnight, this horror swept over this place.

I remember, I think I described in the first part of the interview the day that I found out that my parents got out of Czechoslovakia. I also had that feeling when I got this card that they have survived, of guilt, and this feeling that so many thousands have died and here you are alive. I feel the only way sort of to help alleviate this guilt is to speak up and let future generations know so that this doesn't happen again.

I think that's the predominant thing. Like, I read a story like Anne Frank, who was exactly my age when all this happened, who came more or less from a background like mine. Why am I here and she's not? You know, these are some of the thoughts that I have and I think back on.

As far as Jewish identity, I've always stayed a Zionist. I have strong feelings for Israel. I've gone to Israel many, many times, especially since my parents and my brother live there.

But when I go to Israel, I always have a feeling of being at home. I've lived in the United States now, well, I've been married-- we just had our 40th wedding anniversary. So I've been married 40 years.

This feeling of being at home, I've really never quite had here, even though I'm married to my husband. But I sort of adapted his mode of living. Maybe if I would have associated with more refugees and people with my own childhood background, I might have developed more of a feeling of being completely at home.

But there's always something that isn't quite here. I can't quite put my finger on what it is. It might originate from this feeling of searching, how fate happened one way to one person and another way to another person.

Mimi, it's interesting because I think some of your very reasons for wanting to be a part of this program, for wanting to express your feelings, for wanting to tell of your narrations are probably my very same feelings for my wanting to have been a part of this. I was born here. I suffered minimal traumas at the same age that you were suffering maximum ones.

There, but for the grace of God could have been I and my family that had not left when they did leave. I can well understand some of your feelings. There are certain guilts that we feel, even having not been a part of this, and certain gratefulness that we feel for having been a part and yet not directly hurt by it, as we could have been.

The many Jews that live in the United States are the diaspora, that feel, too, not all, but many of whom feel, too, that Israel is their home, that they're not completely, totally at home until they go there.

Right.

I'm very grateful to you, Mimi, for having shared some of your feelings with us today, for having agreed to become a part of this project, for going down in posterity and on record of sharing your experiences of your life, of your tragedy, of your new life with us today. Thank you very much.

Thanks.

This is Minda Jaffe. Our Holocaust survivor today has been Mimi Ormond. This project is sponsored by the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section.