

Good afternoon.

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I'd like to welcome you to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum's First Person program. First Person is a weekly program that we host on Wednesdays at 1 o'clock. And it features a conversation with a survivor. This year's First Person series is made possible by a grant from the Louis and Dora Smith Foundation.

Just a few housekeeping rules before we begin-- just ask, if you have cell phones, if you have pagers, anything that's going to make a noise, alarm clocks whatever on your watches, if you could turn those off. It can be somewhat disruptive when people are speaking. We'd appreciate that.

Also we'd ask that-- the program will last around one hour, and so we ask that you stay for that entire hour. If you have a permanent exhibition pass, and it says 1:45, please wait until 2 o'clock when the program is over to go up into the permanent exhibit. The pass is good all afternoon. So you don't have to worry. And I think it's very important to these weekly programs. And an opportunity to meet and listen to a survivor, I think, in many ways really help to make your visit here more memorable in that regard.

You also were given an evaluation. We're interested in what you think, so please fill it out and turn it in at the end when you leave. All right?

Today's First Person, I'll introduce you formally in just a minute, is Charlene Schiff. And Charlene is a volunteer here at the museum, and she is a survivor of the Holocaust. Today also, we're privileged. Her husband is with her. And so I just want Ed Schiff to stand or raise your hand so people can see that you're here as well. And so they-- he's here to help and lend support to Charlene.

I want to just kind of talk a little bit about the definition of the word Holocaust. A survivor has one experience during the Holocaust. And of course, we know that there were millions and millions of people had different experiences. So today, Charlene's story is one of millions. And the Holocaust then-- and her experiences fits in.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored, systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1933 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims. 6 million were murdered. Roma, also known as Gypsies, people with disabilities, and Poles were also targeted for destruction and decimation for ethnic, religious, or national reasons. Millions more, including homosexuals, Jehovah's Witnesses, Soviet prisoners of war, and political dissidents, also suffered grievous oppression and death under Nazi tyranny.

Here I want to show you is a picture of Charlene's family. This is a picture of her sister, her mother, and her father. And the name that you see down there, Shulamit is Charlene's given name that she had. And we're going to talk-- we'll come back to this picture later because this is a composite picture. And I think you'll get a better appreciation of why it's a composite later on, after you hear Charlene's story.

Just a little bit about Charlene-- she was born in 1929, in December of 1929, in Poland, as you can see there with the arrow. And she was born with her family-- or she was raised with her family in a small town, now Horochów. Close? Horochów, in Eastern Poland. And here you can see then exactly where that is.

And it's important to know because what will happen during the war is, in 1939, when World War Two begins, that part of Poland, where Charlene was living with her family, falls to the Soviet Union. And so it's not until 1941, the summer of 1941, when the German army goes into the Soviet Union that it falls under German occupation. And you'll hear when Charlene speaks about that difference because that makes a big difference, then, what happens once the German Nazis take over that area.

And just one more picture-- this is a picture of the small town, of the village. And this is a synagogue in that village, in Horochów. And it's a wooden synagogue. And it's interesting to set up to show that this was a

thriving Jewish community with a lot of culture, religious life. But of course, when the Nazis went through and destroyed this area and murdered the Jews, that essentially wiped out much of that culture along with its people. So now I'd like to introduce to you our First Person for today, Mrs. Charlene Schiff.

[APPLAUSE]

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. First, I'd like to thank Mr. Kaiser for his kind introduction. After my remarks, I would welcome questions from the audience. And I'll try to answer them as best as I know how.

For many years I searched within my soul to find the reason for my survival. Alas, I have yet to come up with an answer. But I do know I must bear witness. This is a mandate, my mission, and duty to the millions whose voice was silenced before their time.

The world that I knew and loved so received a death sentence only because it was a Jewish world. Somehow I received a life sentence. I feel imprisoned by my memories, by my past, and I know I can never break free from that prison. But I must speak out for all those who never had a chance. It's not easy to do. And time does not diminish the pain.

Allow me to share with you some of my experiences during the unprecedented tragedy that befell mankind in the 20th century. My parents, older sister, and I lived in a small town in Eastern Poland. The name of the town is Horochów. My father was a professor at the University of Lvov. And both my parents were civic leaders in our hometown.

They were involved in helping not just the Jewish people but the entire community. We lived in harmony, in peace because we tried to help one another. All sorts of meetings, recitals, poetry readings took place in our home. The door was always open, and everyone was welcome. Just to give you an example, my mother organized camps for poor children. And she and a group of other women organized camps, summer camps, for Jewish poor children and for gentile children.

They had to be separate because of our dietary laws. But other than that, they were the same. And so in our community, we lived in harmony, and we tried to live in peace. And so before the war things were rather peaceful in Horochów.

When the war started I was nine years old. Poland was partitioned, with the eastern part going to the Soviet Union and the western part occupied by Germany. The Soviets came in with a lot of fanfare but little bloodshed.

I am sure there were many, many differences, and a lot of things were occurring at that time. But as a child, I remember only one thing. And that was that the schools continued.

Everything seemed to me to be the same as before. However, the official language became Russian instead of Polish. But the area that I come from is used to these changes. The borders changed so often that most people had to learn and have and know two or three languages. And so when the Russian language became the official language, it was really not a very big problem.

In the summer of 1941, the agreement between Hitler-- that was Germany-- and Stalin-- that was the Soviet Union-- was broken. The Germans started their pursuit of their evil goals. Our town, Horochów, was overrun almost immediately. They came in with their tanks, artillery, and long columns of foot soldiers. The local people greeted them with cheers and flowers.

Within the very first days, the Germans rounded up about 300 Jewish leaders, my father among them. They had a list with names, obviously supplied by our neighbors and former friends. It seems that overnight our neighbors and former friends became our enemies. How that happened, I cannot explain.

Confusion and chaos ensued. Every day the Germans issued new decrees. They demanded all our private, personal possessions, like gold, silver, radios, furs, Persian rugs, paintings. They burned all our synagogues, all the prayer books, and all the Torahs. We were ordered to wear a yellow Star of David on the front and on

the back of our clothing.

One day a van pulled up-- we were still in our own home-- in front of our house. And several Germans burst in, looking for my father's private library. They carried out all the rare books, among them some priceless first editions. My father's library was known as one of the finest in the entire area. Local people must have told the Germans about it.

Soon afterwards, we were given an hour or so to get ready. We were herded into the poorest section of town and assigned a space to live. We could take along with us only what we could carry with us. And we had to leave all else behind.

And so the ghetto was established. The area was completely enclosed with wooden fences, high wooden fences and barbed wire, which was on top of the fences. Two gates were guarded 24 hours a day. And one needed a written permit to enter or exit the ghetto.

Adults and children 14 years or older were ordered to slave labor each morning and then marched back to the ghetto in the evening. Often they would come home black and blue from beatings they endured during work. Those who worked received a meager food ration. Children like me received no food at all. Mother and sister shared with me what little food they received.

We had to build bunk beds, as there was not enough room to accommodate everyone in that room. There were three families with us in that same room. Straw served as mattresses. The house held about 100 people. And we all had one very primitive kitchen and a very primitive bathroom-- one for about 100 people.

Slowly and systematically we were completely stripped of all human dignity. A Judenrat was formed, a committee of Jewish men who represented the community and acted on our behalf with the Germans. They had to satisfy every whim of the Germans. And they had to carry out all their orders.

In the beginning, my mother and several other women organized a secret, a clandestine school for children too young to work. The school was held in an old warehouse in the ghetto. Somehow the women were able to barter and obtain some crayons, paper, pencils, and some books.

We read stories, we sang songs, and we colored with bits of crayon. We looked forward to these evening activities, which took our minds off the constant hunger we felt all the time. Soon the money and jewelry to barter for school supplies ran out, and the school fell apart.

And so when we talk about resistance and uprising, I want to bring out the fact that even in my small ghetto in Horochów, there was resistance. The school that my mother and other women organized, that was resistance against the Germans.

Every now and then, at least once a week, there were roundups. Lapanka they called them in Polish. People were grabbed before, during, or after work, or in the middle of the night. They were put in a truck and never heard from again.

Morale was sagging in the ghetto. There were no newspapers, no radios, no mail, no telephones. We were completely cut off from the outside world.

Much against my mother's wishes, I would sneak out of the ghetto when she and my sister were at work. A group of children, about 20 of us, got together, and we dug a hole, sort of like a tunnel that was ingeniously covered. That hole under the fences led to the outside.

Now and then we were able to obtain some food and sneak back to the ghetto. To get caught, one paid with one's life. But hunger is a rather strong motivator.

I must add proudly that no child ever gave away the location of that tunnel. And that, again, to me means that there was resistance. We dug a tunnel to resist the Jews. We were trying to do the best we knew how to live and to somehow subsist against the German regime.

I remember one incident in particular. I bought two eggs from a peasant for a small gold and ruby ring, my mother's. I tried to get back to the ghetto through the camouflaged opening, which was actually a kiosk on the outside, not very far from the ghetto. But before I reached that camouflaged opening, I was caught.

The Ukrainian guard found the eggs. I remember I was wearing a dress with puffed sleeves, and I put an egg in each of the puffs. But he found them anyway.

He threw them on the sidewalk and rubbed my face in them. He yelled at me to get back where I belong and never to come out again. He was one of the rare, kind-hearted guards. My bloody face healed, and I had my life.

Several days later, one of my friends was caught and murdered trying to bring back to the ghetto a half a loaf of bread. She was not quite 11 years old. The Germans would not allow us to bury her. And they put her up on a hill for several days as an example of what not to do.

Conditions in the ghetto deteriorated, continued to deteriorate. People were dying from starvation, from disease, from cold, and from sheer hopelessness. Dead bodies were piled up in the streets for days. In my mind, I can still see them. The innocence and purity of their souls transcended the filth and stench around them. I speak for each one of them. I cannot allow the world to forget.

By early spring, the Germans decided to move the Jews to a smaller area since the population dwindled considerably. That section of town hadn't been occupied in many a year and so the houses were in great disrepair. Some of the houses bordered a river which separated our town from a neighboring village. Fences and barbed wire were installed on three sides. And the new ghetto became enclosed, as the old one was, except there was no fence along the river.

We were lucky. We were assigned a space to live in a house with some other families, but in a house right on the river. Rumors started flying that the ghetto would be liquidated in the summer. When I use the word "liquidation," this is the way the Germans referred to the fact that they would liquidate, they would get rid of, they would murder all the Jews.

My mother and sister continued their slave labor outside the ghetto. Mostly mother was digging ditches and fixing roads. My sister had the good fortune to be in a warehouse outside of the ghetto, knitting articles of clothing for the German soldiers.

Just to give you an example how brutal and sadistic the Germans were, one day my sister was quite ill. She came home from work feeling very ill. My mother spent half the night applying slices of raw potato to her forehead to bring down her fever. These potatoes were supposed to be in our evening supper, but they ended up on my sister's forehead to bring down her temperature.

Early in the morning, she was still too ill to report for work. If she didn't report to work, that meant we would not receive the food ration for that day. And that was very critical to us. And so, even though I was five years younger than my sister, I tried to persuade my mom to allow me to go and take my sister's place for that one day.

Apparently, my mother didn't think that I should do it. But when I tried to talk to her and tell her that my sister always kept saying how lucky she was that she worked in that warehouse and there was very little demand and there was very little anxiety, she gave in.

Now, usually in that warehouse there was one militiaman, usually a Ukrainian guy. And he was only interested in taking the roll call and to see that you were present. And so after that, after he read the roll, took the roll call, he didn't bother people. And so these older girls were doing their work without interruption and without too much trouble.

And so I did manage to persuade my mom that it would be no problem if I would take my sister's place for that one day. And so we got out. She went into her group, and she showed me where the older girls

congregated to go to work. We marched together.

And when we reached the warehouse, which was outside the ghetto, the older girls showed me where my sister was usually sitting. And I sat down there, and they were all encouraging me and giving me signs of approval.

I sat down, and I picked up the two knitting-- knitting needles, the needles and started knitting. I don't remember if it was a scarf, but something simple that my sister was preparing at that time. I know that I was so much younger, and my knitting was not as good as the older girls' was, but nobody paid any attention.

The man, the militiaman took the roll call. And when my sister's name was mentioned, I answered, and I proceeded to do my work. Suddenly there was a commotion on the outside, and a group of Germans burst in. It was my exquisite bad timing that the Germans decided to have an inspection on that day. They burst into the warehouse and positioned themselves all over the big room.

One German stood behind me, watched me for a little while, and then became furious and started cursing for me to knit faster. The more he yelled, the slower I was knitting. And finally he jumped in front of me, his face red and foam coming out of the corner of his mouth. And he watched me for a minute, cursing and screaming, and spitting right into my face. Then he pulled the two knitting needles out of my hands and stuck one of them in my right forefinger.

I passed out, and that was the end for me for that day. I don't remember anything else. But what really happened was that the older girls took care of me.

Needless to say, I did not get the food ration for that day, and my finger became infected. There were no doctors, no medicines, no pharmacies in the ghetto. And consequently, I lost the tip of my right forefinger. But what was most important at that time, I did not get the food. This is just one example of how the Nazis, the Germans, reacted and how they tortured us for very little reason and mostly for no reason at all.

Mother had some contacts on the outside. And she tried desperately to find a farmer who would hide the three of us when the actual liquidation of the ghetto would take place. She couldn't find one farmer. And so she did locate two farmers. One was willing to hide one person, and the other was willing to hide two people.

And at this point, my wonderful mom had to do the impossible. She had to make a decision, how to divide the three of us. And finally in her infinite wisdom, she decided that my sister, who was three years-- five years older than I, would go to the one place. And mother and I would go to the other place when the time was right.

Early in August 1942, the signs became ominous. The number of Germans and Ukrainians increased considerably. One morning I said goodbye to my terrific big sister before she and mother went off to work. We planned to keep in touch. How, I have no idea. That was Mother's job.

My sister was to go right from work to the farmer who was willing to hide one person. Several days later, when Mother returned from work and we didn't hear anything from my sister, that meant that she arrived at her destination OK and that everything was going according to plan.

Mother and I ate our meager dinner, and Mother told me to put on my best clothes and shoes and to take an extra set of clothing with me. And she packed a bundle for herself and one for me. And we were going to escape that evening from the ghetto.

Mother gave me all sorts of directions, how to get to the farmer's place, the farmer who promised to hide us. But I knew where the farmer lived because, before the war, we used to buy dairy products from him. And one of his daughters actually attended the same school and classes as I did. But anyway, Mother wanted to be sure that I knew how to get there.

It was rather scary, as I held tightly onto mother's hand, and we walked out into the dark, still of the night. Soon we were in the river. Suddenly shots rang out. We ducked and hid in the bulrushes. The shots were sporadic, but we couldn't move. It was very quiet in between. And any sound would have given us away.

Early in the morning, the next morning, other people also tried to reach the river. That was the only way one could escape from the ghetto.

The rest of the ghetto was guarded 24 hours a day. The sound of machine guns was more regular now. We heard the guards yelling, "Crawl out, Jew. We can see you." And in Ukrainian, [SPEAKING UKRAINIAN].

We heard babies crying and screams coming from the ghetto. Mother gave me some soggy bread, and it tasted awful. But she insisted I had to eat it to keep strong. We stayed in the river for several days. We saw fire and smoke coming from the ghetto. The cries and screams continued. The bullets were whizzing by, seemingly from every direction.

I was falling asleep standing up. There was no way to crouch because I would drown. The water would be above my head. And so I was standing up all the time. I was dozing now and then, very tired and very discouraged. Suddenly I woke up and Mother was nowhere in sight.

I became numb with fear. I don't think I moved for the rest of that day. By then it became all quiet. I knew I had to make my way to the farmer's place, which was in a neighboring village. Certainly Mother would be waiting there for me. I crossed the river, and I don't know how because I don't know how to swim. But I did cross the river and walked most of that night.

When I reached the familiar farm, the farmer wouldn't even allow me to walk into his house. He directed me to the barn. And he told me my mother wasn't there. And he'd let me stay the day but then I must leave or else he'd report me to the authorities.

I pleaded with him to allow me to stay just a few days. But he was shaking his hand-- his head, and he would not allow me to stay. Ironically, hanging from his dirty coveralls was my father's gold pocket watch and chain.

When night fell, he didn't even come out. His wife came out. She gave me a piece of bread and an apple and told me to leave. I was dazed and too confused to comprehend what was really happening. But this was the beginning of my odyssey.

I felt I let my mother down. She couldn't wake me when it was time to leave. She probably ran into the forests, where she was waiting for me.

That area of Poland abounds with forests. And so logically that's where I started searching for her. Only what looked very near was usually very far. It took me all night to reach the nearest forest. I covered myself with grass and leaves and tried to make some sense out of my situation.

I felt so utterly alone. I had to find my mother. There was no more bread, and the apple was long gone. What was I going to eat? Where was I going to sleep? Who would take care of me?

I had to find forests that were close to the villages, where I could sneak in to get some food in a barn or in an orchard and return to the forest the same night. Darkness was my only cover.

Meanwhile, the days turned into weeks, the weeks into months. The first few weeks I met other stragglers from neighboring villages and towns. They all had similar stories to tell. They were also in ghettos and escaped as the ghettos were being liquidated.

I had many close calls, but one incident is riveted in my mind because it involved other people as well. There were seven of us at the edge of a forest, where we ran into each other. We tried to share helpful information, where to get food, about the area, about other survivors. Then suddenly, we were spotted by a group of children from a neighboring village. "Jews," they yelled with glee and ran back to the village.

There was a small monetary reward for reporting a Jew. That particular forest had very sparse underbrush, so there was no place to really hide. We ran into the fields. It was harvest time. And there were huge haystacks around.

The haystacks in that area at that time were not like the haystacks here in America. These haystacks were long, like barns, and narrow. And so we all ran in to one haystack, and we all hid in that one haystack. Why seven of us ran in and hid in one haystack, I cannot explain, but that's what happened.

When the villagers and the kids came back looking for us, it wasn't very hard for them to zero in on the one haystack. They came with pitchforks and made a game of it. They kept repeatedly stabbing the haystack, laughing and joking among themselves.

By the time they tired of their play, I was the only one left alive. How, I have no idea. I know while I was hiding in that haystack, all I was concerned about was not to sneeze and not to cough.

The dust from the hay was so powerful that all I wanted is to sneeze and to cough. And yet I knew if I did that, I would give away my place in the haystack. And so I kept from doing that.

When it became all quiet and dark, I made my way out. And to my horror, I saw the six mutilated bodies laid out in a neat row, their clothing and shoes removed.

And one picture I will never forget, in our group there was a mother with a young baby strapped to her chest. I didn't even know the names of all these people whom I met that afternoon.

But I did know the name of that little boy. His name was Buzio. And when we met, he was sucking his mother's thumb. I had two precious carrots in my bag, and I gave one of these carrots to the mother. She promptly put it in the baby's mouth. The baby still had that carrot in his mouth.

Obviously, they thought they got us all. That night I walked all night long, and I was still in the same forest. There was nowhere to hide. And so I climbed up a tree. It was a pine tree, and it really hurt.

But it's a good thing I was on top of that tree because below there were all sorts of activities. There were Germans and, I think, Ukrainians. I don't know what they were doing, but they were all over the place. And I just hoped that they would not look up because they could have seen me very clearly.

Another time I met a group of Ukrainian partisans. And they worked against the Germans just like the Jews did. And you would think that we would be on the same-- I mean, we would have the same goals.

But somehow they would not accept me into their group. They were making fun that I did not have a weapon. And they told me I could stay the day and then I must go.

Later on after the war, I was told that I was actually very lucky that they didn't murder me because I was a Jew. On that day when I met them, I "appropriated" a coat, a warm shawl, some food, a pair of boots-- one was two sizes larger than the other, but no matter-- and some matches.

And so my odyssey continued. I was on the run from forest to forest in search of my mother. During three winters and two long years in the forests, I was all alone except for the encounters the first couple of months. My carefree early childhood in a small town did not prepare me for survival in the dark, damp forests of Poland. But the will to live is a great teacher.

My first objective was to avoid confrontations with human beings, who would either kill me or report me to the authorities, which would have been the same. The second was how and where to obtain some food so I would not starve to death. Much of the time hunger forced me to take chances which were in contradiction to my first objective. I had to learn directions without a compass so I wouldn't go around in circles.

Another problem was how to start a fire without matches. Rubbing two damp stones together was

exhausting and most of the time did not produce the desirable results. Out of sheer desperation and indescribable hunger, I started eating insects, worms, and the like.

When the cold weather set in and snow covered the ground, new problems arose. Footprints were a dead giveaway. Protecting myself from the cold was very difficult. In addition, dogs and the villagers were always eager to announce my presence by barking loudly or by biting ferociously at times.

In spite of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and challenges, I managed to persevere day by day by. Everything and everyone was my enemy. Every minute of every day and night was filled with terror. I had many narrow escapes. But against all odds, I did survive. I cheated death, which was always one step behind me.

I never found any of my family. I was told my father was taken to the concentration camp Dachau. That was one version. The other version was that the 300 leaders who were taken away right after the Germans entered our town, they were led to the outside of my town, Horochów. They were ordered to undress. They were ordered to dig their own mass grave. And then they were all murdered.

Someone denounced my sister. And after parading her naked on our main street, ulica Mickiewicza, they murdered her. No one knows anything about my mother. I have nothing tangible to mourn, and there is no closure to my grief.

This is just a microcosm, a small part of the Holocaust. To realize its magnitude, consider the fact that of 5,000 Jews in my small town of Horochów, there were only two survivors, and one of them stands before you now bearing witness and remembering. Sadly, my friend, the other survivor, passed away April 29, 2002.

To realize also the magnitude of the Holocaust, one must remember that 11 million innocent people perished at that time, 6 million Jews and 5 million others. It is something incomprehensible, and yet it happened.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from Protestant minister Pastor Martin Niemoller. Pastor Martin Niemoller disagreed with Hitler, and he was the church's opposition. He was incarcerated and spent many years in concentration camps, but he lived to survive the Holocaust. He passed away in 1984.

And here are his very poignant words, and I quote-- "First they came for the socialists, and I did not speak out because I was not a socialist. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist. Then they came for the Jews, and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me, and there was no one left to speak for me." Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]

We'll now have an opportunity to talk with Charlene a little further and to have a chance for you to ask some questions. Charlene, thank you very much for sharing and for telling us your experiences. I want to start. When was it that you knew that you were, I guess, quote, "safe?" Do you remember that time?

Yes, I do remember. But actually, it wasn't just myself. I was hiding in forests, making my way and hoping against hope that I would still find my mother. In the forest I would dig a little-- I call them graves-- a little grave, camouflage it on the outside, and stay there as long as hunger and cold permitted me to stay in one place.

I didn't know the seasons or the years. All I knew, that in Poland the winters are very harsh and so it was very cold and snowing, or it was not so cold and wet. The sun never penetrated the forests. And so I really never saw any sunshine.

But anyway, I was working my way through the forests at one time. And at that time, I guess it was 1944, when the Soviet Union soldiers started to push the Germans back. And I guess the war was turning in our favor.



As it happened, one division of Soviet Union soldiers ended up working their way through the forest where I was hiding. And several soldiers literally stepped on my little grave. And they undid-- I mean, they tried-- they knew there was something wrong.

And so to their credit and my very good luck, they investigated. And they saw that there was a human being. They cleaned me up from my own filth and took me with them and put me in their field hospitals, which were actually tents that they erected in the forests, where they stayed, usually overnight. They took me with them until they came to a town, city actually, by the name of Luck.

There they found a regular hospital. And they left me in that hospital with a note pinned to my shirt saying, this is a child of the forests. Treat her gently with great care. I'm paraphrasing, I'm sure, because I never saw the note. But in that hospital, they did nurse me back to reasonable health.

And when I was able to stand up on my own two feet, I met the other survivor from my hometown, who was an older lady. But she actually had a family of her own, but she lost everyone. And so she was all alone too. The two of us decided to go to our hometown of Horochów in hopes that we would find some of our families and some friends still alive.

We made our way. It was very difficult because transportation was nonexistent. And we finally ended up in our hometown, Horochów. And we were not greeted with open arms. The local people actually resented our coming back because they felt that we came to claim our possessions and our houses, which was not so.

Anyway, we made our way back to Luck. And that took about a week or so because there was not no organized transportation.

When we came back to Luck, other survivors from neighboring towns and villages came back from their respective homes. I guess towns and villages. And they had very similar reports. They were not greeted very cordially. And at that time, the older people who survived advised us all to go to Germany.

It's ironic, but that's where we would be safe they said. At that time, Germany was under the four powers. That was the United States, France, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union. And the reason was very obvious. We were not welcome in that part of Poland at that time. There were also, at that point, many pogroms. And I'm sure you realize what pogroms are.

Pogroms are actually occurrences that happen when the local people decide that a minority, a group of people in their town, is not welcome. And what they do, they get together and they kill those people. And that's called a pogrom. And at that point, there were many pogroms in Eastern Poland.

One of the most infamous pogroms took place in the city of Kielce. In Kielce, it's a big city, there congregated 40-plus survivors, Jewish survivors. And in a year, a year after the war was over, 1946, on a day that is very dear to all of us here in America, the 4th of July, 1946, a group of local people got together in Kielce and murdered 40-plus Jewish survivors. And that was, I guess, a very obvious message for us to leave Eastern Poland.

And so we made our way. And I won't bore you with how very difficult that journey was. But we finally ended up in Germany. In Germany, the United Nations Rehabilitation and Relief Agency organized what they called DP camps, Displaced Persons camps. And we all were invited to enter these camps. And so that's where I ended up, in a DP camp, several DP camps. The first one was Fohrenwald.

Thank you. All right. We have some time, just a few questions because we're running out of time. But is there anyone in the audience who would like to ask a question?

Yes.

Yes.

I understand-- I believe the number is correct-- that over 80% of the Jews were exterminated that live in

Poland.

Yes.

It surprises me that that percentage was much higher than even Germany. It was like about 55% from Germany. Was the reason that you just gave part of it, or what is the reason for that?

I just want to repeat the question just to make sure everyone heard it. He said that he understands that about 80% of the Jews living in pre-war Poland were murdered during the Holocaust. He wanted to know why that was, and was Charlene's experiences, is that helping to explain exactly that number?

Well, I don't know. I cannot give you an exact answer because I don't know. I cannot go into the psyche of other people's minds. But it seems there was always antisemitism in that part of Europe for centuries. And unfortunately, it seems that the church did not do as much as it could to prevent that. And consequently, that happened.

We are trying now so hard to prevent horrible occurrences like the Holocaust. And we hope that this would actually happen. I want to say a few words now, if I might.

Sure, we always-- one of our traditions here is to have our First Person have the last word. And so now we can turn that over to Charlene.

Yes. Well, it is appropriate. And my plea to you, dear friends, we must continue to fight what I call the four evil I's, the evils of Indifference, Injustice, Intolerance, and Ignorance. These evils, unfortunately, are as pertinent today as they were 60 years ago. We still have-- in the '90s, we had Bosnia, Kosovo, Rwanda. Now we have Darfur, Sudan. And unfortunately, genocide and hate and bigotry are still with us.

I would like to appeal to all you young people in the audience. You've been patient, and you've all given us, and me especially, your great attention. I want to compliment you on that. I want to thank you for coming and for expressing your interest.

You are our dearest possession, dearest treasure. You hold the future in your hands. And let us hope that in your generation bigotry and hatred will be no more. You, I hope, will teach the world to live in peace and harmony, with respect towards all mankind. We don't have room on this planet for hate, genocide, and bigotry.

And our wonderful country is trying to make an example for democracy all over the world. But somehow, so far it has not worked. And so our hope is in our future, in you, our young, beautiful people.

Thank you so much for giving me your attention and your time and for coming here to see this place, which is going to be a legacy in the future. It is also going to be a very wonderful legacy for human rights, not to tamper with human rights because it doesn't pay off at all.

Thank you very much, Charlene.

Thank you.

[APPLAUSE]