

[SIDE CONVERSATION] Good afternoon. I'd like to welcome you all to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. I'm Steve Luckert. I'm the curator of the permanent exhibition and your host for today's program. This program marks-- inaugurates the eighth season of First Person here at the museum. We're very privileged and honored today to have as our first speaker Rabbi Jacob Wiener, who you're going to meet very shortly.

First Person is a series of weekly conversations with survivors of the Holocaust, who share their experiences during this terrible time. Each of the First Person guests that you'll be hearing is a volunteer here at the museum. Each Wednesday, beginning today, through August 30, we will have a First Person guest.

If you're interested, you can go to the museum's website, www.ushmm.org, and you can see a preview of upcoming First Person guests. This 2007 season of First Person is made possible through the generosity of the Louis and Doris Smith Foundation, to whom we are very grateful for their generosity in funding this year's program.

We'll be listening today to Rabbi Wiener as he shares his first-person account of his experiences during the Holocaust. He'll speak for about 40 minutes. Then you'll have the opportunity to ask Jacob some questions about his experiences. But first, before we introduce him, I would like to make a few requests.

First, if possible, we would like you to stay in your seats during the program so that we can minimize any disruption while Rabbi Wiener's speaking. Secondly, we would like to ask you to fill out the response form that you received when you entered the theater and return it to our staff when you leave. Your responses to this program are extremely important to us. And we welcome your responses.

Photography is not permitted during this program. And we ask you to turn off any cell phones or pagers that you might have. If you have passes for the permanent exhibition, between 1:30 and 1:45, they're good for the rest of the day. So don't worry about it, if you have a pass that is timed for this particular time period.

As I mentioned before, today, our guest is Rabbi Jacob Wiener. What I'd like to do is give you a brief historical context, tell you a little about Jacob before we go on with the program.

The Holocaust was the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jewry by Nazi Germany and its collaborators between 1935 and 1945. Jews were the primary victims. Six million were murdered. Gypsies, the handicapped, and Poles were also targeted for destruction or dissemination for racial, ethnic, 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 we're seeing a picture of Rabbi Wiener when he was a young boy, along with his brother and some of the neighborhood children in Bremen. You can see Jacob, with the circle around his head. This was a photograph that was taken near his father's bicycle shop.

This is a map showing Germany in 1933, and Jacob's hometown of Bremen. Jacob was born in 1917 in Bremen, and he was one of four children. When Jacob was growing up, he lived through a very turbulent time, the Great Depression, as well as the street fighting that took place between the Nazis and the communists in the final years of the Weimar Republic in Germany.

During the 1930s, Jacob, after finishing up his education, went to the rabbinical studies in Frankfurt am Main, and later at the Jewish Teachers Seminary in WÄ¼rzburg, Germany. And this is a photograph showing Jacob along with the class at the WÄ¼rzburg Seminary. And this was taken shortly before-- this is a picture of Jacob there. And this was taken shortly before it was closed down by the Nazi authorities in 1938.

This map shows you some of the cities, and towns, and villages that were-- where the Jewish businesses, synagogues, and homes were destroyed during Kristallnacht on November 9 and 10 of 1938. Approximately 7,500 Jewish businesses were destroyed. Hundreds of synagogues were damaged or destroyed during that one night of violence. And almost 30,000 Jewish men were arrested and taken to three concentration camps-- Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Dachau.

Jacob's own mother was killed during that violence. Nazi thugs broke into his parents' home, looking for his father, who wasn't there, and killed his mother. And this is a photograph of Jacob's mother, along with her death certificate.

In 1939, Jacob left Germany and went to Canada, where his father had a relative. Jacob later came to the United States, where he was a student, and began attending the Baltimore Rabbinical College, from which he graduated. In 1948, he married Trudel Farnrog, who was also a survivor. Trudel had left Germany on a Kindertransport and had gone to England.

Jacob and Trudel had three children. And they now-- and Jacob now has 17 grandchildren and two great grandchildren, right?

15.

How many?

15.

[LAUGHTER]

Well, that's close-- 15--

15 and a half.

Well, I'm very honored to invite Rabbi Wiener to come up and share the stage with me. He's a remarkable man, someone who I've gotten to know over the past-- I don't know-- 12 years, maybe 10 years, who I've got to know as a friend and as a colleague.

And I constantly learn new things from him every day. And I'm sure it's going to be no different today. I think we're going to learn some new things that I didn't know, my colleagues didn't know. And I think you're going to walk away better informed about this time. And so thank you very much. And I'd like all of you to welcome our guest, Rabbi Jacob Wiener.

[APPLAUSE]

First of all, I want to say good afternoon and thank you for being the first guest in this First Person series for this year. I have a lot of questions to ask you. But first, I want to ask you a little bit about your-- what it was like growing up in the years before the Nazi party came to power in 1933. Something about your family-- if you could tell us a little bit about your life before the Nazis came to power.

Good afternoon. In the '20s, Germany was a democracy, or Republic, they called it. And life was normal, to a certain extent, except that politically, it was very difficult. Because they had an inflation. They had very hard employment-- very hard to be employed. But in other respects, there was no difference between the people in Germany. Whether they were Jews or non-Jews, there wasn't much difference.

And I remember at one time talking to you about when you were growing up in Bremen, that you even met the president of the German Republic, World War I hero, Paul von Hindenburg, and that you actually spoke to him.

Yeah, the president in Germany at that time was Hindenburg-- Paul von Hindenburg. And he was an elderly man, about 85 already. And he made a speech in the Berger Park, which is a park-- a citizens park in Bremen. And he came back. At that time, they didn't need bodyguards. He came by himself with his stick.

And when he saw me, I was only six, seven years old. He liked children, so he took me to his arm, and he asked me what my name is. I told him. And then he asked me, what do you want to be when you grow up? So I had-- I had some

kind of an idea suddenly. And I said to him, I want to be a mensch.

Mensch is a German word and also a Jewish word. And it means a person, a human being. Because afterwards, Hindenburg was forced, so to say, to shake the hands of Hitler, and he had to make him chancellor.

I think in some ways, that really sums up your life, as a mensch. I mean, someone who devoted your life to humanitarian goals--

Humanitarian, yeah.

And we're going to talk a little bit about that. How did that life change in 1933, when Hitler was appointed?

People already knew before, at least four years before, that Hitler would eventually come to power. Because there was such an upheaval in Germany. There were chancellors every few months, every few days, and so forth. When Hitler finally came to power, there was no other way out for Hindenburg than to appoint him. And he appointed him.

On January 30, 1933, at 5:00 in the afternoon, he was appointed. And from that moment on, it was different. What he wrote in his book, Mein Kampf-- My Battle-- which he had written in prison in 1924, all came true. And from the first moment on, he went against the Jews, mainly. Also, against all the parties-- the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, all the different parties. He went against them, and he wanted to be on top.

On the day when he came to power, he celebrated for seven days. People had to join, must join. They were not given any time to sit down and think of what's happening. They just were so surprised and could not understand this, could not believe it, that he had come to power. But he made them come to power. People were running to become members of the Nazi party. You had to be in low number, then you had privileges.

And within months of Hitler coming to power, he began implementing a number of anti-Jewish policies. And on April 1 of 1933, there was a boycott of Jewish businesses.

Yeah.

How was your father's bicycle shop affected by these new policies? And how was your-- how did your friends react, some of the boys that we saw in the photograph?

He did not only make laws against people who were not of his party, he made laws against Jews, against other people. The parties were all abolished within a few months. And in the month of February-- he came to power in January 1933-- already, in February, he abolished the Communists, because he made a fire-- actually, he made it-- Goebbels made it-- to destroy the Reichstag, which is like the parliament in Germany. And he blamed the Communists. That was the reason for him to abolish the Communist Party.

March was an election for new president. Hitler was running against Hindenburg, and Hindenburg won [GERMAN]. But he joined with another party, the Stahlhelm Party. And what happened is, slowly they took over. April the 1st, 1933, they made a boycott day-- a Day of Solidarity-- against all the Jews. Jews were not allowed to go into the streets. And they had to close their shops and so forth.

Later on, anyone who belonged to a different party, and who wrote to the foreign countries, was called [NON-ENGLISH]. It means something invented and which was not true, but which was true, actually. And so every month, they made something else. And it went on, on and on.

In the end, the whole philosophy of the Nazis was to separate the Jews, especially the Jews, from other people. They were not allowed to talk to each other anymore. They were not allowed to do business with each other and so forth.

But how-- with your father's business, was there a boycott of your father's business? Did the Nazis try to force your father out of business?

Yes. You see, what it is is we had a business. We had a bicycle business. In order to destroy him and so forth, they made, for instance-- number one, they put a competitor at the corner of where our business was, and they made a campaign with-- a secret campaign that all people should go and buy from him and not any more from us.

But since he was not a very good mechanic, he always came over to my father, and said, how do I have to do this? How can I do? What must I do? And so forth.

So they came out. That was number one. Number two, they wanted to use other kinds of tricks to destroy the business. They made a whistle campaign. They sold us goods. And we never bought them. And they said these are stolen goods. Now if you buy stolen goods, it's a crime. And you get to prison for it. You go to prison for it.

So they sold this to us. And one day they called my father, and they brought him to prison. He looked around, and he saw the man next door and someone else, who had come with him, and he wanted to testify against him. But he knew that, so he was released. And there are many other things. In the end, they forbade the Jews to have any kind of business. This was after Kristallnacht.

Now let me ask you about your own personal experiences. You were going to school at the time that Hitler came to power. What was it like going to school? With the Nazis, they began introducing race science, racial thinking into that, anti-Semitism. What was it like for you going to school?

In the beginning, I went to school, to a public school, or to a high school, you see, a governmental school. So from the day on, when Hitler came to power, the teacher came to class-- Heil Hitler. People had to stay up. The students sit down when he leaves. And they introduced a new science, which is called race science.

According to this philosophy-- and they had a philosopher there by the name was Rosenberg, who has a Jewish name, but he wasn't Jewish. He wrote a book, *The Myth of the 20th Century*-- in English. He wrote it in German, but the English translation, *The Myth of the 20th Century*-- that every person belongs to a race.

So he said the Jews are not a religion. They're not an ethnic group. They're not a cultural group. They are a race. And we have different races, the teacher said. We have superior and inferior races. Some people are superior, and some people are inferior. Who is superior? We, the Nazis.

The Nazis belong to the Nordic race. You will see it upstairs in the museum. The Nordic race are people who are tall, who have blond hair, who have blue eyes, who have a nose like this, ears attached, and so forth. This didn't all fit for me because I have blue eyes too, and I was ears like this-- like this, you see. And who are the inferior races? The inferior, which are not so important, you see, at the bottom of the line, at the bottom of the rank, are the Poles, the Gypsies, the Jews, especially the Jews.

So I went over to the teacher and said to him, Mr. So-and-So, I don't think you can divide people by races. You can divide people-- you can say people are different, but not people are superior and inferior. People are different. And we need all kinds of people.

We need a baker, and we need a butcher, and we need this. We need all kinds of people. So everyone is in one respect superior, and in one respect inferior. When you are a baker, you are superior in your baking shop. You may not know mechanics. You are inferior, so to say, that is. So I said this to the teacher.

I want to bring up one point, that Jacob had saved one of his old-- saved some of his school essays, and notebooks, and things from when he was a child. And there was one essay that I remember that the school children had to work on. And the question was, does race mixing lead to the downfall of empires? And that was the essay that they were given to write about. And I was just wondering if you could talk a little bit about that.

Yeah, I was still in that school, in the high school. And we were given a class composition. We had to write about, at school, mixing of races lead to the demise or the annihilation of that race. And the answer was, of course, yes. Because

they said, we know, for instance, that in-- in America-- in Southern America, they're mixing races, so they get lost, and people get lost, which is not always true.

And in Northern-- in Northern America, here in the United States, there's also mixing of races. It hasn't happened yet, but it will eventually happen, so that the people mix, then they lose their status, and they get lost. So people should remain clean and pure. But there's no one in this world who is 100% pure.

So what was the attitude of the other students towards you? Did you lose your friends there? Or were there people that felt some solidarity towards you?

In the beginning, it was just the same as before. One teacher came over to me, and he had this Nazi sign, which was a double ring with a swastika in the end. The double ring, he told me, means my life saver. If I don't become a member of the Nazi party, I lose my job.

And besides this, there's a swastika on there. The swastika is not a German word. It's an Indian word. It means good luck. But in German, it means hakenkreuz, which is more than what-- describes more what it is. Hakenkreuz means a cross with hooks. That's what they call it in Germany-- hakenkreuz.

Now once you graduated from public school, you decided that you wanted to devote your life to Judaism, to teach, to become a rabbi. And I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that decision, to go into-- to do that.

See, when I graduated from that school-- in 1936, I graduated from that school, I still had a diploma, which is called Abitur, which means it gives you permission, a diploma, to enter a university. So they had to write down what do you want to do now.

So I wrote in my final report there to that school, I wrote there, for me, nothing is left. I cannot go into any kind of work-- a profession, because Jews are forbidden to go into these professions. So the only thing is I have to go in something which is of a Jewish type, a Jewish teacher. So I went to become a Jewish teacher. I went to Frankfurt am Main and studied there. And I went to WÃ¼rzburg in Southern Germany, and I studied there.

Now when you were going to school in WÃ¼rzburg, the Kristallnacht happened. The Nazis unleashed this wave of pogroms against the Jewish community in Germany. What was it like for you there at that time? What happened?

Kristallnacht was really a surprise. Because the Jews, the Nazis, had prepared all their lives-- all their years before to make concentration camps, where they would bring the Jews and other people whom they didn't like. And it happened before. But at that time, in 1938, I was in a Jewish school in WÃ¼rzburg.

So I was going home during that night. We were so overwhelmed from all the news and from all the laws which they made against the Jews that I didn't read it anymore. In Germany, they have kiosks, which has round columns and the news are being pasted on it, and you can read it. I didn't even read it.

If I would have read it, I would have known that something happened terrible-- and I'm not going into it-- with Herschel Grynszpan, who had killed a-- not really killed, but, yeah, he died afterwards-- a German ambassador-- and he wasn't even a Nazi, this German-- in Paris. And the Nazis took revenge on all the Jews. They never say that one Jew did it, but all of them-- were Jewry-- is involved, and they're all responsible.

So during that night-- that was on the 9th through the 10th of November, they gave an order that they should invade-- all the Nazis should invade all the Jewish homes and arrest as many people as possible. Why the 9th of November? The 9th of November was a special day in Germany. The 9th of November was the day when the First World War ended. The Armistice was signed on the 9th of November 1918.

On the 9th of November, also Hitler made a putsch in 1924, which he lost and got five months in prison. The 9th of November was always the night which they celebrated. And in Germany, they drink a lot of beer. So on that night, they all came together, and they had a beer party in Munich. Munich was the Nazi capital-- MÃ¼nchen, in German.

And Hitler pushed a button-- 2:00-- now go out like wild animals and do with the Jews what you want. Many people were arrested. 30,000 were arrested. And they burnt 400 or more synagogues and things like that. And I was in school at that time. And they arrested us. And they sent us all to prison first. And from there, they sent them to concentration camps.

Once you got-- once you were released, you went back home to Bremen. And what did you find out?

I was released. And I can say that every day in my life was a miracle. This was also a miracle. Because every German-- every Nazi supervisor, or what it was-- a Sturmführer-- that means a leader of a certain department-- they did something different. I was in Southern Germany, and I was not German. And my brother, in Northern Germany, was considered German and was sent to concentration camp.

Why was I not German? I was born in Germany. But you must know the laws. Every country has different laws. In Germany, when you are born in Germany, you are not automatically German, like in America. You're born here, you're an American-- not there. It goes after their father.

My father came from Russia, so I must have been a Russian. But I was not a Russian. Why not? Because in 1922, when Russia became the Soviet Union, the Soviets said, all Russians in other countries must come back within three months. If they don't come back, we don't acknowledge them anymore. They become stateless-- staatenlos. So I became staatenlos and was staatenlos.

During the democracy-- German democracy, it was very easy to become German. You could buy the German citizenship for 50 marks. My father didn't buy it because he said Germany is underneath anti-Semitic. Maybe a different kind of anti-Semitism-- you have scientific, political, and different kinds of anti-Semitism. So we didn't. I was stateless.

So since I was stateless, the Nazis let me go after eight days in prison. And my brother, whom they did not consider stateless-- they consider him stateless-- they took the stateless too-- sent to concentration camp.

And you went back to your parents' apartment.

I was about 400 kilometers, about 250 miles, away from Bremen. And when I was released, after eight days, on the 18th of September-- of November 1933, I went back home. It wasn't easy, but just to tell you the gist of it, when I came home, to my parents' home-- didn't get any answer when I telephoned.

And I just found out-- when I came home to my house, there was a note at the-- at the door. We had a bicycle business, a store. And here, we had our private quarters. So there was a sign-- get the key from the police department.

So I went to the police department. I got the key, and I opened it. Everything was upside down. They had completely destroyed the whole place. And my-- and the person on the other side of the street, a good friend of mine-- a non-Jewish person, he had a furniture business-- he called me in.

He was afraid to come to the street because it was forbidden to talk to Jews openly. So I came in to him, and he led me into his innermost door-- innermost circle, where he had his-- what do you call it-- the money bank. And he told me the story.

During that night, the Nazis came, and even-- and even people who were our neighbors, who had been our customers even at one time, and they went up to the bedroom of our house, and my mother was there. But my father had fled over the roof, and he had told him, he is going to Sweden.

Why to Sweden? Because there were only three countries during the war that went to Sweden-- that were neutral, all starting with an S-- Sweden, Spain, and Switzerland.

Now what happened is, when they asked my mother, where's your husband, she didn't know, or she didn't want to tell

them that he had fled or so. So they shot her, just like this. The bullet was found later on, and it came to court after the war. But the people were released.

And you also discovered the whereabouts of your father and what happened to your brother as well.

My brother also was sent to a concentration camp, Sachsenhausen. I was not sent anywhere. It was like a miracle. I was let out, free, after the-- after the eight days. And they then went to my mother's family. We had a family in Hamburg, which is a big city in Germany. And I went to Hamburg, and I met them again.

One of the most astounding things, I think, about your life story, that's impressed me, is that following this-- following this massive violence, following all these new measures that were implemented against the Jews after Kristallnacht, is that you wanted to do more for the Jewish community in Bremen.

Yeah.

That you set up a school, a Jewish school, to help those Jewish schools, who had been-- they had been thrown out of schools. And you showed this activism to set up a school. And you had to-- and this was a very difficult decision for you, but you did it. And I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about that.

[MICROPHONE STATIC]

No, yours is-- I think yours is fine. Oh, they're both-- mine's OK? Do you want to-- do you want to switch mics?

Let me see. It's OK now.

It's OK now? OK.

Can you hear me?

No.

Let's see. Is that--

Can you hear me now?

Yes.

OK. So the question was, what I did in regard to building up the new Jewish community there. Because after Kristallnacht, the Nazis let a few Jews out of concentration camps to build a community, and also, only those who had the opportunity to leave Germany soon. So I was also left out from the concentration-- let out from concentration camp.

And when I came back, I joined the community. And then the Nazis wanted from the community that they should elect, or appoint, one of the members, one of the people to become a liaison to the Nazi party. Since I was the youngest-- then-- so they appointed me.

As such, I had to go to the Gestapo. Gestapo means Secret Service police. And they knew everything about the Jews, every day what happened and every minute what happened to the Jews. I had to go to them two times a week and report to them. But my agenda was different.

When I went to them, to the Nazis, they were sitting there with their feet on their desk, and they asked me, tell me something, Jude, what's going on in the Jewish community. I said to them, you know what's going on. You have all the details. But what I want is this. I want to make a Jewish school because you don't let Jewish children have any education anymore.

Education is very important. Because if you don't have education, you can't get a job. You can't-- you don't know what to do in life and things like this. You need education. It's very important.

So I want them to have some kind of education-- make a Jewish school. So they said to me, but we have no place for your Jewish school in Germany. And we cannot allow Jewish children to be taught at the same time when Nazi children are being taught. Nazi children are taught every day school is in. In Germany, it's from 8:00 to 2:00 in the afternoon. They cannot be taught at that time. That would be race mixing-- race mixing.

So I said, OK, give me a school later on in the afternoon. Let me do it. We have no place. I said, OK, we find one. Finally, I found a place. And I had 42 children there that came from the neighborhood. Because the neighborhood was very dangerous. It's very small villages around Bremen. And there was great anti-Semitism.

So they came to the bigger cities. Because they thought in the bigger cities, you see, there's more protection. So they came. So I had them. I made the school. And the school existed until I left Germany. Even later, because I appointed a successor. And he also had the school till 1941.

Now let me ask you about the decision to emigrate. When did you decide to leave Germany with your family?

Jews always-- there was a great emigration from Germany, of German Jews, in 1933. That stopped. And then it started again in 1938, when the Kristallnacht happened. And everyone knew then this is the sign that you must leave-- must leave if you want to keep your life. Because it would get worse. And it did get worse.

So we wrote to all people in the world. My mother wrote to all people in the world. And at that time, there were no typewriters. But she had a beautiful handwriting. I have some letters of her. And she wrote to the whole-- anyone whom they-- whom we could know or who we could find to help us getting out.

So we found people-- my father, who came from Russia-- Russia, you couldn't write to because there was Stalin. You could write to other countries. Like you could write to Canada. You could write to South America. And you could write to them-- what we did.

And so in 1939, you left Germany, and you went to Canada. And at that stage, Canada, like a number of other countries, it was very-- it was very difficult to get in for Jews. But you made it there. Then you also decided to go to school in the United States.

In Canada, they only let in two types of people. In Canada, they let in only people who were either farmers or mechanics. So my father was a mechanic, and I was a farmer. [LAUGHS] Now why was I a farmer? Because I was riding on a hay wagon, on top of it. [LAUGHS]

But eventually, you were-- you were permitted to go from Canada to Baltimore, and to go to the-- to rabbinical school. But one of the-- and I think this says a lot about you, is that people-- German Jews who wanted to get out, who wanted to flee, wrote to you to ask for help. And that they saw you as an individual that was very-- that would be eager and willing to help them. And you corresponded with them.

Yeah, but I couldn't do very much because in order to help people from Germany to come out, I tried to go to organizations to help them and so forth. But you cannot do very much if you don't have money, and other things like this, and influence. And I was new here, so no one knew me.

But the thing is, to go to Canada, and from Canada to the United States was also not too easy. Because at that time, they didn't have an Immigration Naturalization Service. That was only created in 1941-42. But who was in charge of letting someone into the United States? The Consul General of the country. No, Montreal was the biggest city. At that time, Canada was not a country by itself yet. It was a Dominion, British Dominion. It's all history.

So what happened is I went to the Consul General in Montreal, and I told my story. So he said to me, I cannot give you permission myself. I have to call my committee, the FBI, the Army, the Navy-- there was already a war-- to let you in.

Finally, they gave me permission-- temporary permission, because I had no passport. Because, as I mentioned before, I was not a German because-- even though I was born in Germany, but in Germany, you are not a German by being born there, like in the United States. So I had a stateless passport-- passport for "stranger". It means Fremdenpass, Fremden passport. And that was also expiring soon, later. So he gave me permission, finally, to come to the United States as a student.

I came as a student, under category 4E, I think it is. So I came here as a student. And with the condition that I would go immediately to the German embassy. It was 1939-1940. The war started in America in '41. It was still before America entered the war. So what happened is-- so I came there-- here, you see, as a student. And I had to ask for permission to extend it and so forth.

What was the response of Americans, of Canadians when you told them about your experiences in Germany?

There were different experiences. Some of them didn't believe it. They just didn't believe it. I went, for instance, to a place in Canada, you see. There were old people there. And I said to them, I came from Germany, so I want to say a certain blessing. That's a Jewish blessing, which is called to be saved from an emergency. They say there is no emergency in Germany. They didn't believe it.

Came to the United States-- you are a refugee. Because I was an alien refugee. Because when I wanted to join the Air Raid Warden, you see, after two weeks, they told me, you are an alien, you cannot do this.

And before we open it up to questions, I want to just ask you a little bit about something more contemporary, which is your efforts to really educate both the American and German public about what happened. You've been to Germany several times, where you've talked about your experiences to a variety of different audiences, including young German audiences and schoolchildren. I wonder if you could talk a little bit about that.

I'm very much interested that the younger generation should know about it. You should not forget that. We have a sign here, which is zakar. Zakar means to remember. What should you remember?

You should remember, you see, that despite the fact that he wanted to destroy-- Hitler wanted to destroy all the Jews, he did not succeed. We also want to remember that we always must think in a positive way. We must never give up hope.

And so for-- so this is the thing. And when I went to Germany last time, about a year and a half ago, in 2005-- in 1997, I was invited with my daughter, or with my granddaughter-- I was invited by the German government, you see. And I spoke to about 2,000 youngsters. And I got letters and other things like this. And they said they never had such a history lesson before.

Because the older ones, they don't want to tell them because they have a guilty conscience. They feel ashamed about it. So don't want to talk about it to their youngsters.

And when you went back, there was a-- one of those stolpersteine for your mother.

Stolpersteine is something-- I don't know if it has any value or any kind of sense to it, but there is an organization in Germany, Stolpersteine. Stolpersteine means stumble stones. You stumble over it. So in front of a person's house who was killed in the Holocaust or who was somewhere in the Holocaust, they make some stone with a plate, which says the name, when the person was born, and when the person died.

So the last time I was there, one and a half years ago, they made one in front of the house which we-- our house doesn't stand anymore. Because when I came 10 years ago, it was a parking lot. This time, they had built a different house there. And they put it in front of that. And they wanted to do it. I don't think you can remember that.

But this is a way of memorializing--

This is a way of how they memorialize this. In other words, they feel a little bit guilty. But that is, the older generation doesn't talk about it. The younger generation wants to know about it. And that's why I think they should be taught about it.

And some people say don't talk about it. Some people say don't buy from the Germans, don't do this. But we live together, you see. We need certain things. And we have to work together somehow.

Well, what I'd like to do now is open this up to questions. Because I'm sure you're going to have a lot of questions that you want to ask Jacob. And please feel free to do so.

This goes low? Yeah, this goes low. Come, it goes again.

OK, we'll play-- OK, wait a minute. OK.

Yes.

Did you find out-- your brother, did you ever know what happened to him or get together with him again?

Yes. Because after I come home, about a week after Kristallnacht-- after Kristallnacht, the Night of Broken Glass, and I found no one at home, I went to my mother's family. And my father was there, and the brother was there. Except my younger brother, who-- my second brother, I think-- I had four-- who had been in the concentration camp. He might got out by negotiating with the Gestapo.

And then you all emigrated to Canada.

And afterwards, they all emigrated to Canada. And there was also-- I can give you something on that, what I wrote. That it was a miracle that we could stay in Canada. Because Canada was not so friendly to the Jews either. But at least they let them in.

OK. Yes, back there.

It's amazing that you showed such leadership qualities in the face of the Nazi regime when they had refused to set up a Jewish school. But somehow, you said you found space, and then you did start-- in fact, did start a school, apparently right after their denial that you could do so.

So the question was is how did you find the strength to do that? And did the Nazis then follow up and try to disband or discourage the school that you set up?

No. I wrote about this, how I founded the school. Because it was not easy. First of all, as you mentioned, they said we have no place. Then, as I mentioned, it would be mixing of races, which we cannot have Jewish children being taught at the same time when Nazi children are being taught, but I found it.

But then there was a different problem-- how do you find teachers? So I had to educate teachers. We had to make merchant people, you see, into German language teacher, and then one in this teacher. And you had to make all kinds of teachers, you see. And it was a very difficult thing.

And when I left in 1939, in May 31st of '39, then I gave someone else this job. And he had it till 1941, when they closed all education for children.

But was it done in secret?

Did what?

Was it done in secret?

No. No, you see, once we got the school, and the Nazis acknowledged the school, I could do-- I could handle the school. I could be the principal of the school, you see. They knew this.

That was done with the Nazis approval at that time, you see. Because they did not want to give me a place here and there, but finally, they gave me a place. I found a place myself. And they said, OK, you can have your school over there. I negotiated with the Nazis afterwards, but that was a different story.

Yes.

Did your wife's family survive the Holocaust?

My wife's family, not all of them survived. Because it was just too difficult to come to other countries. We wrote to all countries in the world. In the United States, for instance, there was a certificate. You have a certificate what needs a certain number of immigration. They let in certain number of people every year, Jews or non-Jews. And this number was filled up.

So it was very difficult to come to the United States, unless you had a number or you had a transit visa from another country. So I think 24 other people of my family were killed in the Holocaust, maybe more. Do you have any questions?
Yes.

Have you been able to visit Israel? Or how do you feel about the establishment of a Jewish state?

What?

Have you have you been to Israel? And how do you feel about the establishment of a Jewish state?

Yeah, you see it was some kind of a way of going to a country where they felt safe and not persecuted. That was when the state was founded. But the British always made difficulties, as you know. And they didn't want them to have a state because it is British or somehow like this. They didn't want us to have a state.

But in the end, the United Nations, when they voted for a state, there was-- all the countries, even, surprisingly, Russia-- Russia also voted for them to have a state. Because then they still had the feeling of a state. Now everything is upside down. Yes, you've got someone here.

Actually, your question reminded me of something. When you were in Germany, I remember you talked about the various Jewish youth groups that were there, in a previous conversation we had, about the Zionist organizations, some of the scouting organizations.

For instance, if any of you are going into the permanent exhibition, one of the things you could see on the fourth floor is Jacob's scouting book that he has on display there. But you were in contact with the various Zionist organizations and others in Bremen. I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about that.

Yeah, they came together. Because you somehow have to work with other people. You cannot live by yourself. You have to join some kind of people-- your family, close-- you have a close family, or you have friends like this. You see, a person cannot live by himself. And therefore, I want to tell the story, especially to young people. And they should know, you see, that we have to do something. Because what's going on in the world today, we don't know. We know-- but that's what it is. Yes.

Yes, Ellen.

Rabbi Wiener, as a rabbi, you've had a chance to think deeply about the very difficult issues of forgiveness and the role of God in the Holocaust. And you've spoken very eloquently about that. I wonder if you would share your thoughts with us about that.

About forgiveness-- you see, forgiveness, it's not up to me. I can forgive it, but God can forgive it, actually. So, therefore, I can tell you only the things, you see. And that's what I want to tell you. Every person has to think of himself and of other people. Love your neighbor like yourself. You have to love your neighbor.

I think the whole hatred which comes in this world today is because that people don't love themselves. They have no love for themselves, so they have no love for other people. So that's the whole thing. So you have to start by yourself. Charity starts at home.

And what we see in this world, and why did it all come about? Well, it's just hatred. There's so much hatred in this world. What can we do about this hatred? I always say-- the questions always come to me wherever I spoke, can this Holocaust happen again? What can we do to prevent such a Holocaust?

First of all, we cannot do anything about it happening again. It's happening right now. It's happening right now in Darfur, in Sudan. And in other countries, it happens, people-- what can we do about that? We have to recognize other people. We have to know, you see, that we don't live by ourselves. We cannot live alone. We have to live with other people. And if we do not-- if we hate them, we cannot do this.

So, therefore, I say we have to respect other people. You don't have to be like the other people, But. You have to respect them. Respect them as a person and respect me as a person. If they respect each other, then there will be peace-- maybe-- hopefully.

Do we have some more questions? Yes.

Your children and grandchildren, do they like to hear stories about your growing up years in the Holocaust? Or were they not as interested?

What is [? question? ?]

She wanted to know if your children and grandchildren were interested in hearing about your personal experiences during the Holocaust?

From one point of view, yes. And the thing is like this. Some people say I don't want to hear about it. So many things have been talked about, books have been written about it. I know there have been many books written about it. But it has to be told somehow. You see, you have to know history. If you don't know history, you are destined to relive it again, like Santiago says.

So, therefore, you have to learn about it. And you have to know about it. Some people say, I don't want to hear about Germany at all. I don't want-- but even Germany is different today than it was 50 years ago.

Because I was in Germany a year and a half with my daughter, and the young people want to hear about it. The old people don't want to tell about it. Because they feel ashamed, and they have a guilty conscience. And they don't want to hear.

But the young people should know it. Because that's part of history. And we don't learn enough history in the United States, I think. Because sometimes they stop the history by Lincoln. So whatever it happens, we should learn history. It's very important that people know history, what's happened before. Then you don't make the same mistakes again.

When did you first start talking about your experiences?

I didn't talk about it for 30 years, or 40 years. I didn't want to talk about it. But then I said to myself, why shouldn't I talk about it? Because everyone else talks about it, and people want to hear about it. And it has to be taught. History is very important.

And I know a lot of history. And I told you a few things, which you can only understand if you know the history behind it. What's happening in the history makes certain things happen. If you have a different history, different things happen. So you have to know what's going on in the history-- in life, you see.

Your whole life is history. You write down your history. And you should all write down your own history for your parents, for your grandparents, for your children, and so forth. So then when I started, and they don't know about it, and there came deniers, the people who said it didn't happen.

Why did it happen? Because no one spoke up that it did happen and they were in it. We still have deniers today. But if you don't tell them the truth-- history-- the truth is the truth.

There's a book written-- it's called History on Trial. I don't know if you know about this. This book was written by Deborah Lipstadt, my cousin. And she is-- had this lawsuit in England in the year 2000 against the Holocaust denier Martin Irving. And she won without saying a word.

Because there is a television personality, Barbara Walters, who always has two people on it-- a pro and a con. She was asked to go on there. She said, no. Because if you have two sides, then they say there's something right on this side, something right on this side. She didn't go. She said, that's 100% it happened. You cannot deny it. And she won.

I think we have time for one more question. Yeah, OK.

Can you recommend any books, besides that one on the Holocaust? Do you have any that you read or you--

What?

Can you recommend any books on the Holocaust? He's actually finishing up his books.

You can learn many things from any book of the Holocaust survivors. You can learn-- many books. You can write-- learn the book, The War Against the Jews. You can learn anything from other things.

I'm writing on my own book, which is called Time of Terror, Road to Recovery. Time of terror means it was really terror. You didn't know any day what happened the next day. And the road to recovery-- thank God, you see I recovered and I'm still living.

So the thing is, and the most important thing about the Holocaust is that Hitler wanted to destroy, as I mentioned before, all the Jews. And we are still alive. And this happens many times. The evil, it has to be destroyed. And you cannot just live that way.

So what can we do to prevent this from happening again? I said to you before that we have to respect the other. You don't have to be like the other, but you have to respect them. And we see many people in this world today, you see, he want you to be just like him. Every person is different. We have millions of people in this world, and every face is different.

So anything-- that's the miracle of this world. The miracle is you want to live with the others, you have to respect them. But you don't have to convert to him or things like that. You stay by yourself. You are a person. You are the most important person. Charity starts at home, by yourself.

Well, I want to thank you, Rabbi Wiener, for that wonderful program. And I want to thank you for all attending. Because this was-- you helped make this program all that more meaningful. And your questions were very welcome.

So I want to thank you all. I want to thank our special guest for all his contributions to the museum, to this program, and to many other things.

I want to say one last word.

OK, the last word is yours.

That I mentioned to you before, the three D's, what Hitler wanted to do. He wanted to separate all the Jews, especially the Jews, but also other people, like the Gypsies and the Poles. And he wanted to separate them from themselves. They started off with deceit-- lying to them. You're coming into a very nice world.

They come into the-- the second is discrimination, they discriminate. These people are not like you, everyone is different. Of course, everyone's different. I said this before, everyone is different. But it doesn't mean some is superior and some is inferior. They are different-- different.

And then what did he do? In order for them not to succeed, they deported them. They deported all the people into strange section. If you are in a country where you don't know each other, you have no one to help you, no friends. So he wanted to separate the whole world, one from another.

But this will not happen again if we do what I said before, we respect the other people, even though we do not want to be like them. But we respect them as they are, and I respect myself also. So we hope that with this one-- with this respect in the world, you see, not this hatred in their heart, and we want to live. People who kill the other person, they think when they kill someone, they get \$10,000, and they can live for themselves, but the people whom they kill, don't live anymore.

So what's the story? Let's all live. And I wish you all a happy life and a healthy life. And the life, you see, where you will be able to do what you can do, and be yourself, and help other people. Thank you very much.

[APPLAUSE]