

Shari Ferber Kaufman, speech on Monday August 28, 2006

Good morning to you all

I cannot tell you what a wonderful sight it is to look out and see so many people from all over the world gathering together for the purpose of sharing your experiences, learning how to help yourselves as well as give strength to others to cope with the turmoil that still, after so very many years, has stayed with you, and most importantly, the purpose to continue working towards a better understanding of how to educate future generations in order to insure a future where differences in race or religion is not a reason to kill. Nor is it ok for the world to stand by silently.

You have come together as survivors from all over the world, who feel more like family than friends who have been with you for years. You have found here a haven, a place where you can feel safe to share raw emotions and allow yourself to go back and feel the trauma that you rarely allow yourselves to feel throughout all these years. It is a togetherness where it is not only acceptable but mandatory to strip yourself down and lower all of your internal emotional walls, as well as the external walls that keep you emotionally safe every single day. You must allow yourself to express your feelings, in an open forum, the pain, sorrow, and guilt for surviving when so many others perished.

It is important to acknowledge the past and to extend this knowledge to friends, families, schools...in order to help the world around you understand the Holocaust from a more personal perspective regardless of what their race or religion might be. This murderous time can not be allowed to fade into the past as a historical event. It must always be at the forefront of our minds, especially when we sit by and see what the world of today is bringing forth and how little the world has changed when it comes to taking care of the Jewish people. In the Torah we come across in Genesis Cain's answer to G-d after G-d asks Cain where his brother Abel was. Cain answers G-d "Am I my Brother's keeper?" Here we learn that yes, we are all our brother's keepers. We are all guardians of the personal freedoms granted to us by G-d, the guardians of peace and acceptance, the guardians of the right to be free.

I have been speaking in front of audiences for over 25 years and for this is the first time I feel as if I am in a room where every single person is part of a secret club...a club that continues to get smaller, a club of heroes...not because you survived. We know that who was given the chance to survive and who stood no chance had no rhyme or reasoning. No, the reason I feel that you are all heroes is because of what happened after the war, the decision to survive and succeed with a vengeance, a vengeance to live without those who you loved most of all, a vengeance to share your stories in order to empower the next generations with as much understanding of human nature and importance of education. To that I say Kol Hakavod, you have my greatest respect and I am truly humbled.

I look out and I see so many faces, faces whose eyes hold a depth of understanding of what a human being is capable of becoming and overcoming. I see eyes that communicate stories of strength, sadness, pain, and hope; eyes that illuminate the mental and physical endurance and dedication it took to continue and move forward out of the depths of hell back into civilization; eyes that clarify truth, hope, and acceptance for the future of the world.

I have lived with those eyes for 42 years. The eyes of my mother who still carries the guilt of the hidden child; the guilt that what ever she did for her Polish family that saved her, was not enough; that she should have done more.

I see the eyes of my father...the eyes of the young boy who still remembers the feelings of disbelief but unfaltering hope that he felt when the Americans were coming to liberate his people and the emotional confusion of what was to be next. These eyes have been my guiding rays of light throughout my lifetime. They have taught me and haunted me throughout my life.

Today, we stand by and see how the world still won't leave us alone and let us live in peace. Why is it that throughout history and the present, the Jewish people have constantly been held to a higher standard? Why is it when so many countries throughout the world choose to kill their own, or go into other countries and mass murder citizens, nobody bothers with them? Why is it that when a country of around 6 million people goes to war in order to defend themselves, they become terrorists? Because they are Jews and the world is still smitten with the fatal disease of prejudice and antisemitism.

A couple weeks ago the BBC interviewed BB Netanyahu about the situation between Israel and Lebanon. The interviewer asked him: "How come so many more Lebanese have been killed in this

conflict than Israelis?" already setting up the question to taint Israel. Netanyahu answered: "Are you sure that you want to start asking in that direction?" The interviewer asked: "Why not?" Netanyahu said: "Because in World War II more Germans were killed than British and Americans combined, but there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the war was caused by Germany's aggression. In response to the German blitz on London, the British wiped out the entire city of Dresden, burning to death more German civilians than the number of people killed in Hiroshima. Moreover, I could remind you that in 1944, when Britain's own Royal Air Force tried to bomb the Gestapo Headquarters in Copenhagen, some of the bombs missed their target and fell on a Danish children's hospital, killing 83 little children. Perhaps you have another question?" Needless to say, the interviewer was dumbfounded.

And what about King Asaad? In the 80's there was a terrorist threatening to overthrow the government. King Asaad went and gave orders to wipe out the entire village where the terrorist was from in order to set an example against any terrorism in his own country. ...over 45,000 men, women, and children, and the world didn't make a sound. But when the Hezbollah chooses to make targets out of places where children who are orphaned or mentally handicapped by storing munitions or hiding artillery under the building and shooting ketusha's from that point so that Israel blows up the target, the world is aghast at our brutality. So, what's the point? That the world has not changed enough. The point is that we are our own guardians. This is our story to tell and without constant education, and constant reminders, the taping of testimonials, and the sharing of atrocities, the world will never ever change. We will always be the targets.

We cannot allow the world to draw comparisons between the Holocaust and the situation now. It is completely absurd. Israel has shown value for human life. Hezbollah has shown no value for human life...not their own nor their enemy's. What other country in the history of the world drops leaflets 24 hours before they retaliate to give people time to get out of the areas that are to be bombed? No other country, that's who...only Israel. It was so mind boggling to the world that it was swept under the rug and reported like a blip.

We learn that not enough has been done to teach the world. We give out Nobel Peace Prizes and reward many things, most based on intellect, the sophistication of technology, the findings of new medical research...all very important, but all dealing with the intellect side, the non-emotional side of the human being. Taking pride in intellect allows us to think that intelligent people know better than to act in the ways the Nazi's did. We begin to feel safe amongst bright people. We believe the Holocaust could never happen again because people are brighter. Intellect does not bring with it value for human life. More emphasis needs to be put on efforts made towards peace through all channels.

The Global Islamic population is 1,200,000,000, or 20% of the world population. They have received 7 Nobel Peace Prizes. The Global Jewish population is approximately 14,000,000, about .02% of the world. They have received 128 Nobel Peace Prizes. I tell you this, my dear friends, to let you know that we might be a small group but we have had a great positive impact on the world. Each and every one of us needs to decide what will our legacy be to the next generation when we are gone. You must ask yourselves, "are you sharing your stories enough with the people around you?" "Are you using your experiences as a tool for teaching future generations." You people here are truly the chosen people, chosen by G-d to be saved from death, to be saved through the kindness of the few righteous gentiles who went against society, their country, a world who allowed the mass murders to continue. You are the true people of great valor to be remembered and respected for all time. You are the chosen and we are your children and we are your grandchildren. We carry your blood, your strength, and your will and we will pass on your histories and your lessons and your insights years and years after you are no longer here on Earth. What you have shared with us will cause the greatest of ripple effects. Soon the entire world will be educated and rise above the hate and bigotry that drove our people to their deaths.

I stand here as a child of survivors and I promise you that all the pain your eyes carry, all the sorrow in your traumas, the guilt in your survival, and all your great strides to get to where you are today will not have been in vain.

I leave you with this. First of all, take a moment and look at the person next to you, behind you, a table over. Remember how the weekend started and focus on the intimate details you have shared with the survivors around you. Then be selfish and make the commitment to stay in touch, often. Do not let the year go by to wait to rekindle warm feelings. Make it a year of bonding. You owe it to yourself. It is a gift of friendship awaiting you.

Secondly, I would like to thank my parents and their wonderful, "Grina" friends, who no matter where there life has taken them, still consider each other the best of friends...friends with a common language. Each one of you has shared a piece of yourself with me through the years and have made me who I am today. I am honored to have you in my life.

Thirdly, I want to send our love, support, and prayers to our friends here today with us, from our country Israel and to our families over in Israel. May Peace come upon us soon starting with Israel and continue to spread throughout the world.

Lastly, I leave you with a short poem.

I am hiding
 I am hidden
 I am a child
 I am old
 Who is coming?
 Who is looking?
 Where am I?
 Will I be found?
 Are you my mother?
 Where is my father
 I had a sister, long ago
 I am hiding
 I am hidden
 I am a child
 No longer more.
 Free me from
 This pain and sorrow
 Let the guilt
 Wash away from me
 Let me soar
 Like an eagle
 When will I
 finally be free
 I am hiding
 I am hidden
 I am found
 And I am free
 I will make it
 If you help me
 Won't you please
 Stay here with me

Jankuye bardzo
 Vshiskego nailepshego
 Na ustemptia rok Yisraela
 Todah rabah lachim
 She nitraeh
 B'shana haba be yerushalayim
 Todah
 And thank you.