

Honorable Legislators:

I am the daughter of two Holocaust survivors who were born in Poland. Both of my parents were beaten, tortured, imprisoned, enslaved, and starved by the Nazis, and endured concentration camps and death marches. That, while important facts, may not even be the important part of the reason we are here.

Both of them lost their parents, and most of their immediate and extended families. They literally rose from the ashes to create new lives here in the United States. They came without language, without money, without the support of family, and worked extremely hard to be able to live and thrive, and to educate their children. My father, of blessed memory, used to voice his fear that once the survivors were all gone—something quickly becoming a reality—that the Holocaust will be relegated to possibly a paragraph in a history book somewhere. We must not let that happen. More important, my parents, both of blessed memory, always emphasized education, but most often they told my brother and I that they really did not care what we chose to do as a job, but that we must always remember to be a “*mensch*”—a Jewish word for a good, kind and humane person. In the face of what they suffered while the world stood by, to come out feeling and teaching kindness is astounding.

The sheer magnitude of the death and destruction is something that MUST be spoken about now, and in the foreseeable future. The rise of anti-Semitism is exponentially greater in the past several years, in the United States and around the world. If we do not arm our kids NOW by teaching them what hate and evil can do, then they will not be equipped to fight against it. It is a life lesson that bears repeating and repeating, because we are all at risk at our very core. We come together to commemorate the Holocaust at the State Capital; we watch movies, or documentaries and say “isn’t that terrible”, or “I can’t watch that, it is too upsetting”. WE NEED YOU, the seat of our government in Connecticut to be the torchbearers for change—to change the world as it has become, and make it a better, kinder place. THAT starts with you, by making sure that our children are BETTER people, for having the knowledge to arm them to fight against hatred and bullying and evil wherever they see it. That comes from teaching, because they cannot fight against something of which they do not know the genesis.

And as the famous quote goes from Reverend Martin Neimoeller, a Lutheran Minister who was an outspoken critic of the Nazis, and who spent many years in concentration camp because of it:

*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.

Adele R. Jacobs