

“Forgiveness is the Seed of Peace”: Eva Kor’s Journey in Abolishing Hate

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“I call forgiveness the seed of peace, where anger is the seed of war.”

Eva Mozes Kor, Jewish Holocaust Survivor

January 30, 1934, Eva Mozes was born in the small village of Portz, Romania. Eva’s father, Alexander and mother, Jaffa had four girls: Edit, Aliz, and twins Eva and Miriam. Eva and her family endured hate from the people of their town, as they were the only Jewish family in their village. Eva explained in an interview, “Kids in the neighborhood would harass us non-stop” (Kor). She recollected being called “dirty Jew” while tomatoes and eggs were thrown at her by other children living in Portz. Eva, young and innocent, was clueless to why others treated her this way. Eva recollected, “It is like being in a house that is on fire, and you cannot get out” (Kor). When Eva was six years old, her family’s town was occupied by Hungarian Nazi soldiers. After four years of this oppressive Nazi occupation, the family was transported to a ghetto in Simleu Silvaniei, and soon after, Eva’s family was transported to Auschwitz (Stalcup).

Transported in a small, crowded cattle car, the Mozes family, along with other prisoners, arrived at the Auschwitz Death Camp. Upon arrival, two SS soldiers suddenly opened the doors and began yelling, “Schnell! Schnell!” (“Quickly! Quickly!”) Eva’s mother held Eva and her twin, Miriam, because they were the youngest; she had to protect her babies. As Eva’s family exited the car, an SS man shouted, “Twins! Twins!” He pointed directly at Eva and Miriam.

“Twins?” The SS soldier asked Eva’s mother.

“Is that good?” she questioned. He nodded. Eva’s mother quickly exclaimed, “Yes! Yes, they are twins!” Immediately, the soldier grabbed both Eva and her sister. The little girls screamed for their mother whose arms were stretched out in despair. That was the last time Eva and Miriam would see their mother (The Holocaust: Crimes, Heros, and Villians).

Josef Mengele, a German Schutzstaffel Officer and physician at Auschwitz, was infamous for his inhumane medical experiments on prisoners. Particularly interested in twins, Eva and Miriam soon became one of nearly 1,500 sets of twins Josef Mengele performed horrific experimental tests upon. Mengele’s twin experiments included: amputation of limbs, intentionally infecting one twin with typhus or other diseases, transfusing blood of one twin into the other, and attempting to fuse sets of twins together (The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum). Procedures and experiments were done without antiseptic or regards to the well-being of the patient. Often, when an experiment was completed, Mengele would kill both twins and dissect their bodies. If one of the twins died, Mengele would kill the other to compare post-mortem reports. Eva and her sister became subjects of these horrific experiments. Later, Eva reflected upon the Auschwitz experiments, “I was given five injections. That evening I developed an extremely high fever. I was trembling. My arms and my legs were swollen, huge size. Mengele and Dr. Konig and three other doctors came in the next morning. They looked at my fever chart, and Dr. Mengele said, laughingly, ‘Too bad, she is so young. She has only two weeks to live.’” Eva refused to die. “Dying in Auschwitz was the easiest thing to do. Surviving was a full time job” (Kor).

Eva and her sister endured a life nobody should have to endure, especially as innocent children. January 27, 1945, the Soviet Army entered Auschwitz and liberated approximately 7,000 prisoners, almost all ill or dying. 200 of the remaining prisoners were children including

Eva and Miriam. After liberation, Eva and Miriam had nobody left in this world except each other. Their mother, father, and two siblings had lost their lives at Auschwitz. During the next ten months, both girls lived together in three different refugee camps before they were able to move to Romania with their aunt (CANDLES Museum and Education Center). However, Romania was under communist rule and not where the sisters wished to live.

In 1950, Eva and Miriam obtained immigration visas, an opportunity for each to begin a new life. They moved to Israel, finally free from the oppression which had dominated their existence for the first sixteen years of their lives. Over the next ten years, Eva was able to receive an education and joined the Israeli Army Engineering Corps. In 1960, Eva married Michael Kor, also a survivor. They moved to the United States where Eva began sharing her story and touching the lives of people worldwide.

Holocaust Deniers profess the Holocaust never happened. Fifty years after Eva and her sister were liberated from Auschwitz, she returned to the death camp alongside Nazi Doctor, Dr. Hans Münch. He signed a witness statement, confirming the Holocaust occurred, as a way to contradict Holocaust Deniers. Reflecting back upon her experience, she was able to do one thing which seemed to lift an unbearable weight off her shoulders and proved to be a way to open her heart. She forgave. She forgave the Nazi regime. She forgave Hitler. She forgave Josef Mengele. She forgave the hate that tied her down; the hate which oppressed Eva and her family under the hand of evil. People worldwide wondered why? Some saw her forgiveness as an act of dismissal of the Holocaust. However, Eva's intentions of forgiveness were not an attempt to forget this time in her life, but to ease the pain she had been holding on to her entire life. "The biggest gift that we can give victims that have been liberated from any oppressive situation is to teach them how to heal themselves, we cannot heal them.[...] The Holocaust occurred almost seventy years

ago and the majority of the survivors are still victims. Isn't that tragic?" (Kor) stated Eva, who advocates the only way burdens will ease is through forgiveness.

In 1984, Eva and her sister founded the organization, CANDLES (Children of Auschwitz Nazi Deadly Lab Experiments Survivors). CANDLES is credited for reuniting 122 individuals who endured Josef Mengele's dehumanizing experiments. In 1995, the CANDLES Museum opened in Terre Haute, Indiana. The Museum attracted thousands worldwide. In 2003, CANDLES Museum was bombed by an arsonist (Laurier 1). However, Eva and other supporters prevailed and overcame this obstacle. Kiel Majewski, the executive director of CANDLES stated, "You may have destroyed some photos, but you didn't destroy our story. You may have destroyed some exhibits, but you didn't destroy our spirit. You may have destroyed a building, but you didn't destroy our community. Light prevails over darkness, and love will always conquer hate" (Majewski). In 2005, through the support and generosity from people and organizations across the world, the Museum "rose from the ashes" and a new building was erected, officially becoming the new museum site for Eva and Miriam's legacy, CANDLES.

Forgiveness gave Eva the ability to educate the world about her experience so detestable events such as the Holocaust, will never occur again. History can only repeat itself if it is forgotten. Eva Kor has dedicated her life to ensuring the events that took place and the lives that were lost during the Holocaust are never forgotten. Eva Kor's "strength to forgive" symbolizes the key to unlock all unrest within this world. Imagine, if everyone on this planet had the ability to forgive as Eva has exemplified, it is very possible that war, discrimination, poverty, injustice, and hate could be abolished forever.

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