

children. . . . I think that there were tremendous expectations put on us to excel . . . to re-create a new world. The old world was gone—that's what people have to understand—when you're a child of survivors. There are no Polish Jews left, virtually, a handful. It was genocide. We were the beginning of this new world; that's a heavy trip to put on kids. My brother and I reacted differently. I tried to be perfect in every way, the best at everything. He reacted by totally rebelling, and that was how he handled the pressure. He was brilliant, but made a point of screwing up and disappointing my parents. I think there's a lot of ways in which it was different. Our parents were sad. I mean, it was hard to make up for that. It was a sadness that I couldn't change. I couldn't change history; I couldn't change the fact that they would always be sad for losing relatives and their friends in such a horrible way. So I think what was different was that . . . I was constantly trying to please my parents on this global level, almost on this historical level, to give to them something to make up for their pain. And in a sense to parent them, and not to ask to be parented.

Reuben. In my family, I think there was a lot of fear, and I think it was very subtle. If you'd have asked me when I was a child, I wouldn't be aware of it, but after discussing with other children of survivors, I've learned that's what it was. . . . My parents associated with other Jews; their best friends were other Jews. Their closest friends were really other survivors, or people from the old country. I think from that I learned to be afraid of non-Jews. I learned this fear of the outside world, that there was something dangerous out there. That's something I grew up with. It was very subtle, very hard to deal with.

Jew. I can really relate to that. I think as a child I used to feel very different from other kids. I used to be very envious of kids who had American parents; and there was some sense of embarrassment that I had of my parents. . . . I think as a result of that for a long time I always really wanted to emulate being an American, which was almost ridiculous because I was an American, born here, but I felt an outsider. As far as the fear goes. . . . I sense it as being more comfortable at times among other children of survivors or people of the same extraction as my parents. I'm perhaps a little less comfortable with people who are native-born Americans. I've always attributed that, as I thought about it a lot, to the fact that my parents must have been full of fear . . . as they went through this experience. One day, all of a sudden, it became a crime to be a Jew. All their rights were taken away, their parents were taken away, and in a catastrophic, short amount of time, suddenly their whole world was just terrible. I mean, imagine a ten-year-old with his parents being carted off to the train to Auschwitz and being left on his own. I think, somehow, that was in their character, and it

was so terrible that they weren't really able to deal with it. I think that's why often, like your parents, their closest friends were other survivors, because they could relate about it and they could also kind of huddle together in the face of being in this foreign country. I think they themselves had a certain amount of wariness about everybody else, Americans in general, perhaps based on the fact that it could happen again, which was a theme that we often heard.

Nina. My parents sort of took the opposite tack in that we lived in a totally non-Jewish neighborhood my whole life, and it was very strange for me because I had a sense that I was one of the only Jewish kids. I did go to a Jewish school sometimes. But as I said before, I always had this vague fear that if I didn't blend in, I'd be found out. It was very strange for me because my parents weren't even religious Jews or anything, but I sensed that I was from a group of people that it was dangerous to be from, and that the world was a dangerous place for me to be in. It really sticks in my mind that one of my father's favorite phrases—and he still says it a lot today whenever he sees a group of people together being real loving and happy—is: "You turn off the gas and the electricity and then you'll see what happens. They'll turn into wild animals." Always pointing out that the world is not as safe as it looks. So I think I grew up also being very cynical at a very early age, often expecting the worst to happen. I don't know if that's totally connected to it, but I suspect that it is.

Sarah. I remember being very angry at my parents. I'm an only child and I always used to feel that if only I had brothers and sisters then I would feel it was a family. I'd hear all my friends talk about what they did with their family, and for me it was what I did with my parents, when we went someplace on a weekend. . . . And they'd talk about going to uncles and aunts, cousins and grandparents. I remember being very, very angry—almost feeling, why did you leave them? Or why couldn't you take other people with you? I mean, you left, why wouldn't they go with you? Why couldn't you have convinced them? If you thought that it was the right thing to do, why didn't you leave earlier? 'Cause I'd hear stories that they felt things were really bad. My parents got married in '37 and decided not to have any children. "Times were just not good right now." And when I think about—I mean, they're not religious, and they came from very religious homes—to make that kind of a decision all those years ago is not what it is now. People didn't think about those things. It was: you got married, you had kids. And to say, "Well, things are really rough and it would be rough if we have to travel with a kid," I mean, who would know what might happen? Then I know that they know families that did have kids in '42, and I'm always amazed that I know people who