

I gained, and I think it's the most precious thing to have gained, and I'm thankful that I lived my life as a progressive person.

Ruthen. I think I also have to agree with some of the things you said. I learned, I think, a sensitivity to people's suffering, and I feel that I have a responsibility to teach people about the past. I learned an appreciation for history. I learned my geography very well at an early age, looking at maps of where everybody was. But I also think I get exercised about injustice around the world and in my own community. I think it's also made my being Jewish more important, and because of that I want to study and find out why I'm Jewish and what a Jew is. That's become very important.

Sarah. I feel differently. I don't feel that I've gained. I've always wanted to be more ordinary, and that really hasn't changed.

Joel. Have you been a member of a group?

Sarah. I was seven years ago. I think it met for 12 weeks.

Joel. Because one thing I noticed about myself, anyway, is that since I joined the group I think I just became a lot more proud of my history, and really appreciated all the things that are brought out. . . . Until that point I would never really mention in casual conversation that I was the child of a survivor, and I'd feel sort of like you did. . . . Our parents really did something incredible to have survived against all those incredible odds, and the things that they saw were remarkable. They saw a side of human nature that nobody will see, well, perhaps in Vietnam. But things that the average person would never see. And having grown up with them, their view of the world—for all the things, being a sort of a dangerous place—but their appreciation of the world and its depth and what human character is about, that transferred down to us. So I'm sort of proud to really be some of that same stock that could stand up to that test and survive that great thing, that horrible thing.

The legacy of the Holocaust for the second generation is filled with emotional complexity that children of survivors have internalized and are only now, as adults, beginning to sort out. Many of us have discovered that to sit and talk with other children of survivors can be a powerful, healing experience. There is no need to justify oneself and there is instant recognition of similar family patterns and values. We've experienced moments of relief, outbursts of laughter, self-acceptance, and a feeling of a collective bond. Many of us, as a result of these discussions, have begun to reconnect with our parents in a different way, and for the first time have started to sort out together what the Holocaust means to each of us and how it has affected each of our lives, generation to generation.