

LESSON: Teaching with Holocaust Survivor Testimony

HANDOUT: Aaron A. Eiferman Letter

Letter

April 27, 1945.

To the future and us.

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My Darling Wife:

I read your letter about the death of president Roosevelt. And all of the soldiers feel the same, he was a great man and always will be remembered [sic]. But we have seen something here that overpowers the death of anyone back home. We have seen what can be called the living dead.

Moving up into a new position we came across a prison camp (concentration) camp for Jews from the different countries of Europe. After digging our foxholes, and preparing our defence, we went out to see what a concentration camp looked like. What we seen was anoff [sic] to last us the rest of our lives.

As we entered [sic] the camp the first thing we saw was the burned down buildings, but a little farther on we got the shock of our lives. There on the ground in the middle of the burned buildings was the charred [sic] remains of the Jewish slain [or slave?] workers, the smell of the bodys [sic] was sickening. They were stretched out in all kinds of ~~forms~~ mishaped [sic] forms. Some with there [sic] mouths open in agony, others shot and burned looking like waxend [sic] figurines, and still others burned so bad you could not recognise them at all.

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As the american soldiers rode by the few survivors they waved there [sic] arms in the air and saluted every vehical [sic] that went by. If you could only see the light in there [sic] eyes you would know what I mean. It has been six years today that some of them have been interned. And six years ago today that any of them had any hope of living like normal people again. It will

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take time for these people to be well again for not ~~more~~ one of them weighs over a ~~hundred~~ 80 pounds. Thats Why I refered [sic] to them as the living dead, nothing but skin bone, and ~~meat~~ a little meat, with a soul.

Well it was time to move again
so on we went, [sic] We didn't [crossed out word] go very far before we moved into a new position. After getting out of the halftrack, I noticed something that looked like a gray rock, not 150 yards away, so I took my gun and went to investigate. As I came upon the object it turned out to be a person under some gray covers. Not knowing who was under the blankets I had to be careful [sic], so I pointed my gun at him, and asked in German who is there!, and then ~~pointed~~ told him to get up. But he didn't move, so I grabbed the blankets and pulled them from over his head, the sight that hit me was more than a person could express

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in words. It was another one of the Jewish slave labours [sic]. He thought I was a German soldier and he looked at me as if to say please put me out of my misery please kill me and let me have some peace. But when I told him I was an American soldier and also Jewish, he grabed [sic] my hand and started to kiss it. But I can't stand things like that and pulled my hand away. It was to [sic] much for me, for I had tears in my eyes and a lump in my throat as big as a frog.

This one man had lived in the
[crossed out words] Forests and fields for five days. All he had to [crossed out word]
eat was a couple of raw potatoes, and was so weak he could not stand up, so a few moments later I brought some food and water. It was hard to keep him from drinking to [sic] much water for he had not had any all the time he was in the field.

While I was there one of the
boys called an ambulance to take him away, and while waiting for the ambulance I talked to him.

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He was only 30 years old but he looked like 50.
He told me that the children to [sic] young to work and
the folk to [sic] old to work, all were cremated, and if

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a man becomes sick the guards just kill him.
The poor man told me he had been married two
years before the Germans took him. I asked him
if he knew were [sic] his wife was, and he told me that
he didn't know were [sic] she is, but as soon as he [was]
strong anoff [sic] he was going back to the ~~state~~
town he lived in and wait for her even if he had
to wait the rest of his life. There he was a man
weighing not more than a ~~hundred~~ 80 pounds, and not
able to stand on his feet or lift a piece of bread
to his mouth. Talking about living with his wife
Again, mabe [sic] having children if she was still able.
enjoying life. once more. How can we complain about
our little troubles when a man who has been in
a concentration camp for 6 years, who face death
every day of the year, can talk of the good things
he is going to do, instead of what has happened
To him [crossed out word] through those six horrible years.

As they put him in the
ambulance the last I could here [sic], was him praying.
I asked the driver were [sic] he was taking him, and
he told me, they first bring him into a German
house, and make the people bath [sic] him and put

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clean cloths [sic] on him, then they will take him to
a civilian hospital were [sic] he will be treated and given
care until he regains his strength. And when they
are able to be moved, sent back to there [sic] homes
were [sic] they can live in peace the rest of there [sic] lives.
I forgot to mention a lot of them were made steral [sic].

I have talked with quite a few

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of these people some old some young. I told them that the Jewish people back home have not forgotten them that there are organizations which are raising money to help them by sending here food clothing medical supplies [sic] and other things of importance. I know that mom [crossed out letter] can back that statement up. If the other Jewish people back home could of seen what I have they would help all the more to make good the things that Hitler helped ruin in so few years.

Although I may never talk about it what I have ~~written~~ witnessed today, I will will never forget what I have seen. If I don't Write for a few days I hope you will understand
I love you. Love your Husband

Arnold