

An Introduction to Acts of Courage, by Bernard Otterman

In 1944, a Polish Jewish lawyer named Raphael Lemkin coined the word "genocide" to describe the deliberate killing of a large group of people, especially those of a particular ethnic or religious group. Lemkin crafted the word from "genos," the Greek word for family, tribe, or race; and the suffix "-cide," the Latin word for killing.

While the word is less than 75 years old, it's important to remember that acts of genocide have occurred since tribes and nations arose thousands of years ago. In the 20th century, one genocide received a special name: **the Holocaust**. This genocide intended to exterminate all Jewish people by industrial methods. All of us must insure that this crime never, never be forgotten, or repeated upon the Jews or others.

Those who survived the Holocaust did so through a combination of resistance, perseverance and luck. They never gave up hope, and they took courageous actions when facing death to save themselves and others.

During WWII, I was a child between the ages of three and eight living in Poland. My parents took action whenever they felt that obeying the Nazis would result in certain death. It took courage, extreme courage, to take a chance when the threat required it. One such action was taken by my mother when she forced me to jump off a moving train on route to an extermination camp.

The purpose of this program is to deepen your knowledge of the Holocaust and ask you to combine this knowledge with an act of courage to improve your community. By putting what we learn about the Holocaust into positive, proactive action for the good of others, this program will help build a better world for ourselves and future generations. Together we can ensure the lessons of the Holocaust are not forgotten, and create a world without genocide.