



Library podcast

Karen Treiger Discusses 'My Soul Is Filled with Joy: A Holocaust Story'

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[00:00:36] Hello everyone we're going to get started. Good evening. I'm Heather Marker and I'm a librarian here in the history department. Welcome to the Central Library. And to tonight's event with author Karen Treiger she is here to discuss her book. *My Soul is Filled with Joy* a Holocaust story. Our program will begin with a presentation and reading from Karen followed by a question and answer period. And then Karen will sign books at the end. It is now my pleasure to introduce tonight's author. A native of Seattle, Karen Treiger graduated from Barnard College in New York University Law School where she served as Editor in Chief of The New York University Law Review. After 18 years in the profession she retired from her law practice to research and write, *My Soul is Filled with Joy*, a true labor of love. Since its publication Treiger has traveled nationally and internationally to share her book's important and compelling story with audiences. *My Soul is Filled with Joy* has been translated into Polish and is winner of bronze medal from the independent publisher Book Awards in the world history category. *My Soul is Filled with Joy* is also a Pacific Northwest Writers Association Nancy Pearl Award finalist in the memoir category the winner

[00:01:42] Saturday night - we're going to find out! The winner of that award will be announced Saturday night and we wish Karen the best of luck.

[00:01:48] Please welcome Karen Treiger. You guys could vote for me. Send in your votes. If you're a librarian you can.

[00:01:54] You can vote. OK. Thank you Heather. You have been so wonderful to work with. It's really appreciated and I I so deeply appreciate the library and all that it provides to everyone in Seattle. So thank you all for coming. The people that I know in the audience and those that I don't know welcome and as I'm not telling you anything that you don't know. But

today is 9/11 and I thought that it would be appropriate to pause before we, before I begin really the heart of my presentation. Just have a minute to remember that 18 years ago this horrible event happened in New York City. And so many people were killed and it traumatized and injured and hurt so many others. And as I was thinking about it I thought about this act was an act of hate. This act was an act of war. And you know it's not that long ago that we were our our world was in the middle of World War 2 and the Holocaust was happening. And that was an act of hate and bigotry that led to the death of six million Jewish people and many others. But I thought that you know it's just it's a sad statement that that we haven't, I feel like as a society we're not that far, we haven't progressed quite enough yet. And I feel like our world sometimes still feels like a world filled with with hate and bigotry. And I want to say that I think it's our job to stand up against the hate and the bigotry and to make a stand and it's each of us who can as citizens of this wonderful country stand up and say No we don't want. That's not the country that we want. We want a country and a world of kindness where we're helping each other not hurting each other. Thank you.

[00:03:48] So I also want to mention that since today is the eighteenth, this today is the 18th, anniversary of September 11th and in Hebrew the Hebrew letters have magical numerical values and probably the most famous magical numerical value of the Hebrew letter world is 18 because the letters that stand for the number 18 are Chai make the word Chai which means life.

[00:04:15] And so although we're 18 years out from this horrible hateful event I think that we can celebrate life and we can celebrate hope and we can look to the future with lives filled with hope because we can make it so. So I just want to say it's you know when Jews have a toast they say L'Chaim and kind comes from Chai which is 18. So it's a very important numerical number and in the Jewish in the Jewish world.

[00:04:42] So yeah that was a terrible day. L'Chiam.

[00:04:50] Today we're going to talk about the story of Sam and Esther Goldberg and I'm really happy. I don't want to embarrass him but I will just say that Shlomo is here tonight. My husband and this is his. These are his parents. And he was born in America. But they were born in Poland and they were both born in small towns in Poland and they're both sole survivors of their very large families Jewish families in Poland. And I entered the family and really didn't know that didn't know about their survival story and didn't know that much. I knew something about the Holocaust certainly but I didn't know the details and the trauma that individual survivors went through.

[00:05:32] But as I learned their story and I heard it a number of times and I was like wow this your story has to be a book but it wasn't a time in my life that I could write a book. I was we were living in Seattle. I was practicing law raising we were raising four children. But as time went on the time came where I said OK. This is my time I'm going to do it. And I left my law practice. Now four years ago and I dedicated myself to writing their story. And it took me three

years to research and write the book and the crazy crazy thing is that the the book that I thought I was going to write is not the book I wrote. The book I thought I was going to write was there is their story which I did. But then their story became my story. And that's the way that I sort of traveled through history and brought that history to us today. And my family was all part of it. And it just it's it is a story of hope and it is a story of Chai. And that's why that's in part why the title is *My Soul is Filled with Joy* because my soul was filled with joy. But those words did come out of my mouth came out of somebody else's mouth but I knew that if I was going to tell their story I was going to have to go meet them when they were young. I couldn't do it when they you know. The Sam and Esther that I knew they were retired Jewish immigrants in Miami.

[00:07:03] That was not the story that I wanted to tell. I wanted to tell this story. And so I had to go digging and I had to do a lot of digging to get there.

[00:07:12] But what I'm going to do tonight in the brief time that we have together is I'm going to share with you Esther's story a brief outline of Esther's story and an outline of Sam's story. And then I'm going to take you on a time capsule 75 years later and tell you some of the crazy things that happened to me and my family in the context of this book. So I apologize. I always like before I start Esther and Sam are both past. They're both. They're both gone. And so I ask them in heaven for forgiveness for telling their stories in abbreviated form. I encourage you if you if you haven't read the book already to read it. It has a more full full version and rich details about their life before the war during the war so we'll start with Esther.

[00:08:00] So Esther was 19 years old when the war started and she lived at first in a town. Let's see if this works. Oh awesome. Look at that. OK so cool. OK. So she lived in this town here called Stoczek and my father in law Sam lived in this town Bagatelle up there. Not very far from each other and the big dots doesn't mean that they were big towns. They were tiny but they did not know each other. I promise they did not know each other. And Esther lived in a town that was a shtetl if you know that Yiddish word it means a small Jewish town where 90 percent of the people were Jews and 10 percent of the people were non-Jews. And many of the non-Jews lived around there were more non-Jews that lived around the town in like like circling the town than they owned farmland all around. And she lived in this town and this is a picture. The only picture that survived the war from her family her parents. This is her father Shlomo Zalman for whom Shlomo is in part named and her mother Bracha and Shlomo Zalman was a melamed.

[00:09:07] which means a Jewish teacher of young children. And he would teach them how to read Hebrew. He would teach them the Bible all in Yiddish. They spoke Yiddish and they lived in a house that was somewhat similar to this horrible looking structure that I took this picture in 2016 when I went back to Poland. But imagine it seventy five years ago perhaps it looked a little better. You have to hope that it looks a little better. Seventy five years ago because when we saw it there was like pieces falling off and it was pretty terrible. But that is most likely the very typical house in Stoczek where Esther grew up. It was one big room with a small alcove

on the side. And then this is this chimney. If you go down from the chimney you have a hearth and the hearth warmed the house as well as was a place to cook. And this area here you see like this little triangle space that was an attic and the attic in one of these types of houses becomes important in Esther's survival later later on.

[00:10:08] As as the war as the war moves moves on. But they live there. And Esther Esther lived with. She had four four siblings. She was number two out of five. So second oldest out of five. And then the war started September 1 1939. We all know that day Germany attacked Poland and they came in with infantry and bombing and they went into every single town. And it took me a while for reading a lot of accounts of what happened during the war to kind of come to some understanding of how they did it so quickly they took control of towns and cities. I mean Warsaw the biggest city that took a little while longer - that took a few weeks but these towns they took over them very quickly. But they came in and terrorized the population. They started shooting people randomly. They started burning down houses and burning down shops. And this is what happened to Esther's house. The Wisznia house that was their last name. Esther Wisznia and their house was burned to the ground in that very first attack. It wasn't exactly September 1 1939. But let's say two weeks later they arrive in their town. And now her family is homeless and they have nowhere to go. And the Germans the Nazis are in control of their town. Now it's important. I always feel like at this point like here we are in 2019.

[00:11:36] We all actually know what happened right. But in 1939 they did not know that there was going to be this thing called the final solution that was going to murder everybody in their family except Esther. Along with six million other Jews they just knew that the Germans did not like the Jews and they wanted them gone. They wanted their territory that they controlled to be Judenfrei - free or clean of Jews. But there really, Hitler did not have a plan in 1939 to exterminate all the Jews. He didn't. He wanted them just gone. He wanted to get rid of them. And that was at that point was just to get them to leave. So hundreds of thousands of Jews left the German controlled territory. But what you have to remember and what you have to know about is something that I learned as I studied this map. Here's Germany here's the Soviet Union, see my standing in the way, Soviet Union, Germany, Poland is here. Germany attacks from the west on September 1, Soviet Union attacks two weeks later from the east. This way they had made a friendship pact two weeks before the beginning of the war. Hitler and Stalin said let's be friends let's make a deal. You attack from this side. We'll attack from that side. We'll split it down the middle. Fabulous.

[00:12:57] That was the deal. And that is what happened. And this yellow line down the middle of Poland is this the split line. This is the German controlled side. And this is the Soviet controlled side to be actually historically correct. This area over here. I can't exactly give you the exact border but this section of Poland was annexed by Germany right away. And it because they said hey this used to be part of Germany so like we want it back. And so they took it back and then but this middle part here especially the part of Warsaw and where my in-laws both lived Bagatelle and Stoczek, German controlled section. So it wasn't good to be a Jew in the German controlled section. So hundreds of thousands of Jewish people left and

they crossed that yellow line and they went to the Soviet side because even though it may not be the nicest place to live under Soviet control because it was a communist situation there were there were food shortages.

[00:13:55] It was crowded in different places but they didn't want to kill them. They could become citizens they could live. So this is what Esther's family did and they went from Stoczek all the way to Bialystok which was over, way over that yellow line. And they went by train and they lived in Bialystok for a year. Esther lived in Bialystok for a year. And she they got Soviet citizenship. They became comrades and they got jobs. Esther had a job knitting hats. Her brothers worked on the railroad. And they lived together but it got so crowded Bialystok went from one hundred thousand people which was 50/50 Jewish not Jewish before the war to two hundred thousand within months after the war 100000 refugees, Jewish refugees, fled from that from the German controlled side over that yellow line.

[00:14:48] Can you imagine. I was thinking of trying to think about this like in a way that I could understand it.

[00:14:53] Imagine if Seattle doubled in our population in four or five months.

[00:15:00] Right. I mean we're like all complaining that it's so crowded already. It would be really really crowded. And that is exactly what happened. It was extremely crowded so the Soviets came around and forced people to move because it was just it was simply just too crowded. So the Wisznia family was forced to move even farther east and they went to Slonim. That's a picture of a synagogue in 1940 in Slonim. So they were all living in Slonim for another year. They lived there. So now we're two years into the war. They're living in Slonim. Under Soviet control they're working they're handling a little on the black market they're making do. And I thought as I thought about it I thought well they probably thought this is not the best situation for us like our houses burned down, our home.

[00:15:47] We had to flee. But our family is together. All OK we're not starving. Maybe maybe this is our new reality. Like maybe this is the new normal for us. Maybe one day we'll get to go back home. Maybe we won't. We don't know. How long can this war go on - people said all the time but it kept going. But what happened turned really south very quickly because in June of 1941 Hitler took his friendship pact with the Soviet Union and ripped it up and threw it out the window. And Germany attacks the Soviet Union June 21, 1941 and Wisznia family as here in Slonim when the German army attacks and moves it's moving towards Moscow right towards St. Petersburg and Leningrad it wants to control all of the Soviet Union. Well they had a special army unit that followed the main army that took control of every town and city as they went and was a special unit called the Einsatzgruppen.

[00:16:54] And they had one job and their job was to go to every single town after it was controlled by the Germans gather the Jewish people of the town take them outside the town and shoot them one by one into a pit. And that is exactly what happened to the Jews of Slonim

August of 1941. Ten thousand Jews were taken from Slonim taken out of town and shot into a pit one by one with bullets. It's a fantastic book called the *Holocaust by the Bullets* that's written by a French Catholic priest. He went east and he started to locate these areas of mass murder and he is marking them as places of mass murder and he's also interviewing people who now are obviously in their 80s and 90s but who were witnesses on those days and he's documenting what really happened there because we don't we don't hear about that much but a million people were murdered this way by bullets one one by one into pits in Eastern Poland and the four areas of the former Soviet Union. So what happened to Esther?

[00:18:06] Her parents and her four siblings were all murdered in this way in this pit outside of Slonim. Well Esther was in the hospital she had typhus. Typhus is a, is a disease that's very communicable.

[00:18:23] It's it's passed a lot when you have people in crowded living quarters in dirty and unsanitary places and you can die from that for sure you can die from that.

[00:18:33] So she was in the hospital and she was gone but she was getting better. She really was getting better but it was the day that this happened that I don't know she never talked about this. So I don't know how she felt about it because she didn't talk about it and Sam would tell stories about his time during the war. Esther did not like to talk about it at all which very common. And you have to just respect that. But I tried to imagine. I mean here I am writing a book about it. Right I got to write something. I did a ton of research but when I came to this part of the book having to write like what that might have felt like for her as she was in the hospital and heard about what just happened to all the Jews including her parents and her siblings. That was I. You know that I just cried for like a day doing that one. And I don't think I did a very good job. How can you do a good job in that? You can't. You do the best you can and move on. But she was well enough and she just said OK I'm out of here. She got up out of the hospital and left that day and she ended up deciding to go back to Stoczek her hometown. It took her over a month to get home but she did she went by horse and buggy. The trains were all controlled by the Germans. So you couldn't get on the trains a Jew for sure couldn't get on the train. They'd just be killed. So she went by horse and buggy this way in that way in this way in that way.

[00:19:59] But in my research I found out something that like again I like cried for a couple hours because I just hoped that Esther didn't know about this. I found through the testimony that I found at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum testimony by someone else who wrote about a man named Herschel Rosenblatt. Herschel Rosenblatt was a man who was in that same hospital when Esther was there and it the tale that is told in this one page testimony very short but it says that he was in that hospital and two or three days after the Einsatzgruppen murders the ten thousand Jews outside in the pits. They come back to town to mop up and they go into that hospital which was all Jewish patients and they killed every single patient in their bed. They shot and Hershel was one of them. He died there. And this person was writing about him like memorializing him. And I was like wait a minute Esther missed the

huge horrible massacre outside of Slonim because she was in the hospital and then she missed the hospital massacre because because of her gumption or whatever need she had to get to get the hell out of there she did. So these are just miracles that happened over and over again to allow people anyone who survived the Holocaust had many miracles that happened to them. These are two that happened to Esther Goldberg. So she goes back to Slonim. I mean sorry. That's when she goes back to Stoczek. And we as a group right now sorry to do this to you but we're going to leave her there and we're going to. She's in. She's there. She's managing.

[00:21:42] She's OK and now we're going to talk about Sam. Sam Goldberg who is my father in law.

[00:21:49] He was about this tall. Esther was about this tall.

[00:21:53] So they were both very short people. But Sam Goldberg lived in a tiny tiny farming village called Bagatelle.

[00:21:59] And this is a picture that I took in 2016 on our visit and this is his farm. This is his family farm. And it goes all the way back to where these trees are like was was was really big. And this area here is where their house was.

[00:22:14] This guy over here was our videographer that we hired for the day but we went and visited it and Shlomo has told me this story I'm gonna tell a story that you have told me because it tells a lot about Sam and Esther and what the Goldberg farm was like. His father's name was Zelig and his mother's name Chaya Faiga he had five siblings and their family, they, to make a living they had a big farm they grew and traded produce but they also traded in timber and cattle had a lot of cows. But, they were you know you can't say it's like Bill Gates or something. But they were well off for the town of Bagatelle. They were you know they had enough to live on comfortably. Let's put it that way in this tiny tiny village. So sometimes Sam would in his life in America and someone would overhear this he would say you know we had such a nice farm we had so many cows it was so beautiful. I you know he was reminiscing about his beautiful life on the farm which that's how he felt about it.

[00:23:19] And Esther would say yeah yeah yeah. Rockefeller from Bagatelle. So that kind of tells you a lot about Sam and Esther and it tells you how Sam felt about his life before the war.

[00:23:35] But then again Germany invades September 1, 1939. We've we've just jumped back two years right. That's where we are. Here we are. Bagatelle is here and the Nazis come. Not too long after the war begins. To this tiny. Why do they care about this tiny farming village. They care. They took control of the farming village and they kicked the Goldbergs off the farm. So they go over the, remember that yellow line? They go over the yellow line but not very far. Just about 12 miles they go to a place called Kowalowka come here. Why? They had relatives there. Why does why do people go places. They had relatives. OK so they're living there but

it's under Soviet control. So now they become Soviet citizens. Now Sam's siblings one of his, they were, all the other siblings were married and his sister and her husband went to Russia and they were really never heard from again. The rest of them actually an ironic twist of fate, go to Slonim. So you might imagine what happened to them in Slonim them a couple of years later but that's where they went. But Sam stays with his parents and they go to Kowalowka. And they become Soviet citizens. Sam gets a job delivering mail and that's what they're doing. But Sam when the war starts we don't know exactly how old he is he lied about his age totally but he was probably around 21 and so now he's 21 Soviet citizen living in Kowalowka he got conscripted into the Soviet army and his army unit went to Ciechanowiec which is here.

[00:25:16] His job in the army was to build and repair bridges. And this is where Sam Goldberg was when Hitler ripped up that friendship pact with the Soviet Union and attacked the Soviet Union. And this is not very far over that yellow line over that border. So his unit was probably one of the first to be attacked and they came in with bombs and infantry and just like unbelievable harshness of their attack. Sam hid under a bridge under a partially built bridge. And that's how he survived the initial attack when he came out. He hated being in the army by the way. But this was this was worse. He came out and he said that the ground was just littered with dead soldiers because of the bombing and the infantry that came in so strong and so. But there were some that were alive. Anyone that was alive was captured immediately immediately by the Germans and taken to a prisoner of war camp. And this is where they went in Zembrow. So now Sam Goldberg a Jewish guy from the tiniest town you ever saw in your life is was in the Soviet Army and now he's a Soviet soldier in a German prisoner of Jewish Soviet soldier in a German prisoner of war camp. This is not good. So there's a fantastic story that Sam told many times about how he escapes from the P.O.W. camp but I'm not going to tell you because we don't have time. You should totally read it because it's a great story. But I will tell you three things to tease you into the story that helped him to escape from the prisoner of war camp.

[00:26:53] One is a sugar cube, two is a screaming girl, and three is a scarecrow. That's my picture of a scarecrow. And that's all I'm telling you. But he escaped and he went back to Kowalowka where his parents were. Now the Germans are in control of Kowalowka now. That whole area. The Germans are in control of it. But his parents were alive and he was alive and they had a moment of gratitude and celebration for that. And so ultimately Sam goes with some friends to a town called Stoczek. Now you might remember that town because that's Esther's town. They still don't know each other but he goes to Stoczek. And he goes there and he starts doing butchering. He had a lot of cattle on his farm if you remember. He knew how to butcher animals and prepared them for meat and to sell them. So he was making some money doing that in Stoczek until his luck ran out in June of 1942. They came to that town of Stoczek. The Nazis came they surrounded the town and they captured one hundred and thirty five men one of whom was Sam Goldberg and they took them by truck to a place called Treblinka. Now if you know what happened at Treblinka you will be shuddering with with with fear. But when Sam went there it was an open field. It wasn't the death camp that we now know it became. It was one shack. It was an empty field nothing there.

[00:28:27] But these hundred and thirty five men had to come and they were forced to build the camp. They had to build every single building except the gas chambers that was reserved for the German engineers. So that was Sam's initial job at Treblinka. But then he became appointed as the supervisor of the laundry. That's a good job at Treblinka. If you can imagine a good job at Treblinka death camp. Why? Because he was indoors, it was really cold. It is really cold in Poland in the winter. So he was indoors. He had they cooked the laundry. The laundry was done the old fashioned way. No machine. They had these big huge pots with fire underneath and water and they would have to agitate and cook the laundry basically. So the if you have a pot and you have fire and water you can cook something else too right. So he would steal potatoes from the kitchen and cook them in his pots. He had at one point up to thirty six women working for him in the laundry. Sometimes 10 sometimes 20. But the most at one time was 36. And he would cook the potatoes and he would he together with the women that were working for him, they would eat the potatoes. So they always had food. And then he would take whatever was left to the patients in the Treblinka hospital and when I think about if you're in a hospital in a death camp like that you're probably not very well. But he really felt strongly that this was something that that helped him to survive was by helping these patients in the hospital. And he he felt he told me a number of times that he felt like it was his he survived that God allowed him to survive because of the merit of feeding the patients in the hospital so that's what he did. But he's in Treblinka and Treblinka was a place where eight hundred and seventy thousand people were murdered mostly Jews but a few thousand Roma and they were murdered mostly in gas chambers. Sam was one of sixty five people to survive that place yeah.

[00:30:45] The Jews had to do the building except the gas chambers I'm sorry. [INAUDIBLE]

[00:30:53] It wasn't the gas chambers weren't built by Mercedes. They were a different German engineering company. The name I can remember right now. But it's actually in a footnote in my book. Yeah. It wasn't Mercedes. Yeah it was another one. But it was a very complicated place though.

[00:31:09] It was a horrible place but. OK. So with you with your permission I'm going to just read a story that I wrote in the book. It's Sam's story that I did my best to convey in the book and the reason that I like to read this story is because I think well OK I'm just going to read it and we'll talk about it afterwards because I don't want to I don't want to ruin it.

[00:31:30] Sam ran the laundry as a business. He didn't know what went on in the tailor shop, the shoe shop, or other Treblinka businesses. I had to make sure that my business was in order. Sam later said and if I did things in order I would have success. One day a *Kapo*, now a *Kapo*, pause a *Kapo* was a Jewish over overseer of the of the workers in Treblinka. Appointed by the Nazis and he was in charge you could not you could not come up against a *Kapo* or you would be dead.

[00:32:05] One day a *Kapo* saw some of his relatives get off the train from Warsaw to save them from the gas chamber. He ordered Sam out of the laundry. The *Kapo* intended to replace Sam with four of his Warsaw relatives. "I've been working here for a year already," Sam said. "You're going to take me out of here and put me in hell?" The *Kapo* started to hit Sam with a *beitch* and a *conchik*, whips made from wire and leather. Grabbing a wooden board, Sam hit the *Kapo* over the head. Falling to the ground, blood ran from his head. At Treblinka to hit a *Kapo* was a capital offense. The *Kapo* called The Nazi *Obersturmführer* who was that... who the prisoners nicknamed "Stinker," but Sam called "a bastard, a terrible bastard." The Stinker ordered the carpenters to build a gallows to hang Sam. "Don't hang him, hang the *Kapo*," The women of the laundry said to the *Obersturmführer*. "If you hang him hang us all."

[00:33:02] "Why?" the Stinker asked. "Because the Jews are coming from Warsaw and the *Kapo* was going to take Shmulik," that was Sam, "out of the laundry and put in four of his relatives," one woman retorted. The German asked the *Kapo* what was Sam's crime. "He stole money and gave it to the Ukrainians," the *Kapo* said. "This is not true. He didn't steal any money. He works very hard, but the *Kapo* wants to take him out,"

[00:33:24] The women said. The *Obersturmführer* saw what was going on and he gave Sam his gun and he gestured that he should shoot the *Kapo*. "No I won't shoot anybody. No sir, I don't want to," said Sam. So the Stinker shot the *Kapo* in the head and Sam returned to the laundry with his female saviors. So why.

[00:33:51] Why do I share that story? Sam had other stories from Treblinka but I have to choose something to share. I choose that one because it shows when you got up in the morning at Treblinka. You did not know if you would be alive at the end of the day. That's number one. Number two it shows so much about Sam Goldberg's character. This was a man who obviously the women that were working with him together in the laundry. They obviously loved him because to stand up for someone in a death camp meant you were putting your life. And they even said hang us all but they just for speaking up they could have been shot. Boom boom boom boom boom like that. No problem. It was Treblinka. But they stood up anyway. And then Sam when he's given the chance to kill the *Kapo*. Like when he's told that story a number of times. Like to me and I am like kill the *Kapo*. Kill. Kill him. You know he wants that he wants you to go to the gas chamber. Kill him. And he's like No he wouldn't stoop to the level of inhumanity and evil that was all around him. It says a lot about who he was. But finally the thing that I think is almost the most disturbing part about this is like I end the story as I write it.

[00:35:07] I end it like Sam goes back with his female saviors to the laundry like he's saved like it's hurrah. Yeah. Sam saved. What do you think happened to the four *Kapo* relatives that got off the train from Warsaw? They went straight to the gas chamber. People who got off that train. They were dead in 90 minutes. That's how long it took to get off the train. Take off your clothes. The women had their haircut run down the road to heaven is what it was called. This thin path that went straight into the gas chamber and then they were dead unless you were selected for work that was it and not oh you're only eight hundred people out of eight hundred

and seventy thousand that were in the slave labor workforce. Sam was one of those. He was a slave there but time went on. Train load after train load comes to Treblinka every day thousands of people. But time's going on. An August summer of 1943 comes around and a group of men at Treblinka say enough is enough. Let's make an uprising. And Sam was one of 50 men who planned and executed an uprising in August of 1943. August 2nd 1943 and this photo is a photo that I found in Yad Vashem which is the the the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem.

[00:36:30] I found this in the photo archive and it's a picture taken on the day August 2nd 1943 of the explosion in the camp that was that was the beginning of the uprising was taken from about 10 miles away. They know who took the picture. It's like it's a thing. It's real. And I'm like wow this was the day of the, that was the explosion because what they did to start the uprising was they there was an electrician. One of the members of the uprising was an electrician. Sam said he was brilliant brilliant man and he wired this. He made a wire that went to the gas can. There was a gas station that filled up their tanks there, well they didn't have tanks there, their jeeps and stuff. You know their trucks and they blew it up. He pressed a button and blew it up and the place except for the gas chambers the whole place was would built of wooden structures. So the whole place went up. And it was middle of August hot as anything. And that's what happened. And they blew a hole in the fence in the barbed wire fence and all these 800 prisoners were now running out that hole in the fence.

[00:37:33] And Sam was part of this uprising and he had some grenades and a gun and he sort of threw his grenades and shot his gun and he just wanted to run and run out run out through the hole in the fence which he did. Now Samuel Willenberg who is a man who was a survivor of Treblinka. And he was part of this uprising. He wrote a beautiful memoir about Treblinka about his experience there and in it he describes this moment of chaos.

[00:37:58] And there were just people running everywhere. And then Ukrainian guards were still in the watchtowers above and they were shooting people as they were running running towards the fence. So people are dying here and dying there. But every person was just doing their best to run through that hole in the fence. And he said what he remembers most about that moment is that he can still hear it in his ears and hear the prisoners were running and they were screaming Hurrah hurrah hurrah. Because they were running to freedom. They were trying their best to get out of there. And that's what Sam did and he ran and he ran right through that hole and he kept running till he got about 10 12 miles away to this patch of forest.

[00:38:41] And it's in this patch of forest that Esther has been hiding for a year already and this is where they meet, he escapes Treblinka. She's hiding in this forest.

[00:38:54] She finds him and he's like I just escaped from Treblinka. She probably didn't say this but I would have said Holy shit. Right. She didn't swear that not too much. And so I don't think she said that she was I would like oh my. And so but we have to just we have to dial back just for a minute because when we left Esther she was Stoczek.

[00:39:14] Remember she had us. She had escaped the massacre in Slonim. And she got to Stoczek and it was in Stoczek after Treblinka was up and running. September of 1942 the Nazis came and surrounded that little town and took all the remaining Jews that were there about 400 that were left there and they took them straight to Treblinka and murdered them all. So again how did Esther survive. Well she and some other people hid in remember the little triangular attic. I showed you in the very beginning. They hid in one of those houses in that triangular attic. Now Esther Goldberg my mother in law was a very smart woman. This is what she did. She took a sign a piece of paper and she wrote on it in German. This house belongs to Germans and she put it on the front door and she put a big lock on the door and then she climbed through the window went up to the attic the Germans saw the sign. They saw the lock. They did not go in the house. They did not find them in the attic. That's how they survived the roundup. And after a few days it quieted down.

[00:40:22] They were starving by this point and they they climbed out the window and ran into the woods. Now you didn't want to be with a big group. There were certain number of people who had survived the roundup. But so Esther went with a few other people one of whom was a young teenager named Chaim. And they went and they'd go. They went to they were starving and they started knocking on the doors of their now remember these are their neighbors. They grew up with these people and they knocked on the door. They said we're starving can you help us. And they're like Go away

[00:40:47] Go away. We can't help you. And some people said if you don't go away now I'm going to turn you into the Germans and they no one would help them. So they tried a few places and it was unsuccessful. Finally they went a little farther out of town.

[00:41:01] Now remember I told you that there were some some non-Jewish people who lived around the town and had farms. Well they knocked on one of the doors the door of a woman named Helena Styś. They knew her from town from business and they knocked on the door and she opened the door and she knew them and she knew that they must have survived the roundup and they said we're starving.

[00:41:27] Will you help us. And she said I will help you and she gave them food and she let them hide in her barn.

[00:41:34] And she had next door to Helena lived another Styś family. There were two brothers that lived next door to each other and both families helped. They lived. Sometimes they hid sometimes in that barn sometimes in that barn and sometimes out in the woods. And this is how they. She and this other man survived for like a year this way. Until Sam shows up on the scene a year later. And so Esther says Oh my God. And she takes him to Helena and again she knocks on the door and she said this man just escaped from Treblinka. You have to hide us. They're going to be searching everywhere. Which they did. They actually found more Jews than had escaped Treblinka. Because they found people hiding in the woods. True said. That

was that was an interview by the commandant the commander of Treblinka said that anyway. So they knew that they had to hide and she was like Are you kidding. They're going to be searching everywhere. And if they find you on my property on our property you're dead and we're all dead. Because everyone knew that if they were found the Christian families that were helping they would all be killed. There was, everybody knew that, that was everybody knew and it happened it actually happened. But she said yes. As Esther just talked her into it. That's really what happened. And she said yes. And they hid in the barn for three days and then after everything quieted down they went out into this patch of forest and they went deeper into the patch of forest and Sam said Let's dig a pit in the forest and we'll camouflage the pit and we will become invisible.

[00:43:12] And let's we'll live in that pit. And that's what they did. The three of them Esther, Haim, and Sam dug a pit and they lived in the pit had it camouflaged to look like the forest floor. And when it was really really cold they lived in the barn of one of the Styś families. And it was described to us how one of the dads built a fake a big box a wooden box like I don't know big enough for three people to be in it and covered it with hay. So if you came into the barn in the middle of winter was very cold so they wouldn't have survived in the pit. So in the winter they came into the barn. They lived inside that fake hay stack. Day after day they lived in that fake hay stack and they mostly only came out at night because that was the only time it would be safe to come out. Then in July of 1944 they were liberated by the Soviet army as the Soviets were pushing back pushing the German army back back through Poland all the way to Germany and ultimately with Germany's surrender. But they were free in July of 1944 and they came out of the pit and they were like we're free and they went back to the town of Stoczek. And three months later they got married and then they decided to stay in Poland because this is their country.

[00:44:30] They thought OK this is bad but we're staying here for now. And they moved to a different town and they gave they gave birth a year later to my sister law Shlomo's sister named Fay. And they had a baby and then it was in this town they were living in where it became known to them that some non-Jewish Polish people wanted to kill them. And so they had to escape in the middle of the night and they left in middle of the night and they went to Germany to a DP camp to a displaced persons camp where many many Jewish refugees who had survived the Holocaust survived the war. Were were their living and on the one hand being protected on the other hand you know caged in again. So it was a very complicated place but they lived there for like four years until finally they came to, they got visas to America and came in on a boat across the ocean in May of 1949 and came to New York City and two years later Shlomo was born. And two years after that his sister Molly was born. And that was the Goldberg family and I end their story when they arrive in New York because someone else gets to tell their story of what happened when they lived in New York. That wasn't what I wanted to do but now I'm going to take you in a time capsule. Seventy five years. Jump ahead. Karen Treiger, right. Elder Law Attorney, Seattle native, fifth generation Seattle.

[00:45:58] Well I think I'll write a book about my in-laws story in the Holocaust. That sounds like a good idea. I'm like that's what I'm going to do now. I'm just going to leave my law practice and write a book. I didn't know what I was doing. Had no idea what I was doing.

[00:46:10] Actually the first thing I did was take a writing class which my friend Rich right here was in the class and it was a great experience and it helped me not to, the book does not sound that much like a like a legal memo. Thank goodness. But I called my sister-in-law, I knew I'd have to go to Poland if I was going to write a book about Poland I was going to have to go there. And I called my sister-in-law and I said I just want to go and find Helena Styś' house do you. She'd been to Poland already. Do you have any idea how I can find her house. Did you find it? She said no I have no idea. OK I'll try. I knew I was gonna find it. I'm like I don't know how but I'm gonna find it. So then a couple of weeks later she called me back and she's like Karen you know I don't know where Helena lives but when my father died in his condo I found this stack of letters. I saved them but I have no idea what they say or who they're from because they're in Polish. Do you want them maybe they'll help you. I said yes send them over. So through these letters in Polish that we had translated, obviously, and through the help of an amazing woman named Joanna Millick we were able to locate and then visit the three surviving children of those two righteous gentile families who helped Sam and Esther survive during the war.

[00:47:26] And I'm going to introduce them to you this is Jan, this is Janina.

[00:47:35] She was 90 years old when we met her. And this is Eugeniusz it's unfortunately the only one of the three still alive today but when we met Eugeniusz he was the youngest of all the Styś children and he told us that it was his job to take food in a pail out to the hidden Jews in the pit in the forest. So why was it his job like you know that's a that's a scary job right. Like why give it to a 9 year old child. He said well he thought I was like I didn't like - don't you understand anything. Like it was me because like I could go to the forest and I could pretend I was playing and I could go in and pretend I was playing and then I would leave the pail by the by the pit.

[00:48:18] And then after dark they would come out and get the food and he said because we had to we had to hide. You weren't just hiding from the Nazis which you were you were hiding from your Polish neighbors because it was many Polish neighbors who would inform on families that were hiding or helping Jews.

[00:48:40] And if they delivered a Jew to the Germans alive or dead didn't matter they got a kilo of sugar as a reward and in wartime a kilo of sugar was extremely valuable. So Eugeniusz told us this story but we sat with them for hours and they told us story after story about what life was like during the war with these three Jews hidden in their barn and hidden in a pit in the forest outside. And Esther would come into their home and and sew their ratted up clothes. Imagine what their clothes look like and Janina said you know wasn't the clothes they could repair the clothes because they had Esther was a very good seamstress but it was the shoes

that were really a problem because they couldn't repair their shoes and they were falling apart anyway. I found that to be fascinating because I always thought about the clothes, but. Here it is. That's Helena's house. My dream came true. We were standing right outside that door the door that Esther knocked on and said - will you help us? And she looked evil in the eye, and she said yes, I won't be one of them, I will help you. And, my family was there in 2016.

[00:49:51] Let me introduce you. Some of them are here and some of them are just in the picture. But this is Jack. Raise your hand Jackers. That's our son and his wife Emma and Shlomo is here and this is our, this is our daughter Shoshana who lives in Israel who is married to Micha Hacoen. That's his name. This is our oldest daughter Elisheva who lives in New York and Esther is named for her grandmother Esther. She's our youngest and she's a student at Barnard College. But right now she's studying abroad in Amman, Jordan. So that's what she's doing now. But there we were at Helena's house. Not only that there's the barn. That's the barn where the fake hay stack was and it was Eugeniusz and Jan's dad who built that fake hay stack.

[00:50:36] And they said yes. It was what - they remembered it like yesterday. They're like Yeah it was right over here. It was like this big and the hay was on top and we would come out and play cards with them. And I'm like Wow I always wondered what they did all day. But now I know they had a deck of cards. That's all I know.

[00:50:51] But then we're sitting and talking and and I don't know if it was Jan or Eugeniusz, but we're sitting in this little tiny living room and they look at Shlomo and they say well when we're done talking we'll take you out to the forest and we'll show you the pit where your parents lived.

[00:51:07] And we were all like, what? You? What? Could you say that again?

[00:51:14] And they said well do you want to see it. It's still there and we're like yes we want to see it. So we couldn't believe it - what we're about to see.

[00:51:23] So we followed Eugeniusz. There he is walking through the forest just like he was 9 years old. He knew just where to go. He's just walking down the path. He knew exactly where it was. And there he is.

[00:51:33] And we could hear the leaves crunching under our feet and the wind blowing in the tops of the trees.

[00:51:39] It was we were all silent and then there it is, there's the pit. Now mind you it's seventy-five-years later, it's degraded, it's eroded, it's full of leaves. But it did not stop Shlomo from stepping right into it.

[00:52:01] And we all stood there for quite a long time not quite knowing how to process this and what to do we were crying some but Eugeniusz was describing how the hardest part of digging that pit was not digging the pit was what you do with the dirt. Because if you made a pile of dirt people, Polish people, who came through the forest would know there was a Jew hidden somewhere, and they would find you and they would turn you in.

[00:52:28] So they had to disperse the dirt all over the forest floor so that it didn't look like someone had just dug a pit. Well, here we are back in Eugeniusz's living room which is the house that he grew up in right next door to Helena. This is Eugeniusz. This is his wife Alina. This is Grzegorz Maleszewski who's the grandson of one of the families. This is his uncle. This is Jan's daughter and this is Shlomo. Now before we left Shlomo was like realized he was going to meet the three surviving children of the people who helped his parents survive in this most terrible situation. And he's like oh how do I say thank you? What, how am I going to say thank you to these people? I mean chocolate doesn't sound right. All right. Box of chocolate just wasn't going to cut it, although we did bring some smoked salmon from Seattle but he had this brilliant idea and it is a brilliant idea. He decided to compose some music to some verses of Psalms number 30. Now why did he pick this particular Psalm? This is the Psalm in English: You Lord brought me up from hell gave me life from the depths of the pit. Those verses are on his father Sam Goldberg's tombstone where he's buried in Israel. Can you think of a better epitaph for Sam Goldberg because he was in hell, and he came up, and he was in a pit and he came out. And, then it continues: sing to the Lord you his righteous ones and give thanks to his holy name for his anger last only a moment but his favor lasts a lifetime weeping may stay for the night but rejoicing comes in the morning.

[00:54:14] So what really hit I don't want to speak for you but join in anytime if you want. But what really spoke to Shlomo after this was this word the righteous ones because in Hebrew we say Tzadikim, Tzadikim Olam the righteous ones of the world. That's how we described people like the Styś' who risked their own lives and the lives of their families to help Jewish people during the Holocaust. So that's why he did this. So right now I'm going to show you a short video clip and it is this is Janina. I'm going to tell you what's in it so I don't have to interrupt it. Janina and Sholomo are speaking a little bit and then you're going to see you're going to see the inside of Helena Styś' house a couple of our kids are kind of walking through it with some music. Our videographer put this together and then and then you'll see some pictures of some of the members of the Styś family who who are no longer alive because we wanted to kind of meet them you know even though they're not with us. And then you'll see Sholomo speaking to the Styś in this tiny little living room.

[00:55:19] And then we, my family, Shlomo and I and our kids that were there, got up and sang the song, the music that Sholmo composed to these verses in Hebrew and then Janina the 90 year old woman sings back to us a song in Polish a song about the goodness of God.

[00:55:42] There are like really small subtitles in English but I don't know if you'll be able to see it but just know what she's singing is that God is good and that God created all of humanity right.

[00:55:57] So that really happened. It was it was a day that changed all of our lives and that we will never ever forget as long as we live. So a lot of other stuff happened but jumping to 2019 I published the book in Polish. Thank you. My big goal was to get a book that the Styś family members could read and understand. And I did it and I was able to hand the book to Eugeniusz the last survivor of those all the children and his wife. And that was an amazing thing for me to be able to do. I was so happy about it. And I had a book launch party in Warsaw and all of the people in this picture all these people are descendants of Helena Styś they all came to the book launch party and they all got books and they were they're so proud of what their grandmother and great grandmother did. And it's an amazing thing. And then this is a picture of the Goldberg family in April of 2018. And this Sholmo as you already met him. This is his sister Fay and his sister Molly.

[00:57:06] And these are spouses and children and spouses and one one great great grand great grandson there in the on the left that I think when when I have audiences like this and people who read the book some of the things that that I hope I hope are conveyed by the book and by the presentation that I that I share is number one like this is what happened to me when I was standing there looking in that pit I looked in that pit and then later I went back to my hotel room in Warsaw and I crawled into my bed. I was exhausted but when I crawled into my bed I was like I don't ever want to take this for granted again I don't want to take what I have in my life for granted I'm not living. I mean it's extreme. Obviously it was the Holocaust and World War Two but I'm not living in a pit. I have food. I have a house when I get home. I've got a fridge full of food and a closet full of clothes and I want to live my life. I want to try to live my life in more with more gratitude. So that's number one. I hope that people who read the book and hear the presentation feel a little bit more grateful for their life and for what they have in their lives. Secondly something that's like really hit me hard when over the course of the years when I was working on this and that is that when we make a choice in life we make a lot of choices. Everyday we make choices but we don't really sometimes know what the result of those choices will be during the war. There were the choices where a lot of life and death choices and Styś made a choice to help when very few people stood up against the evil and helped. Esther made a choice to take to bring Sam into her hiding place and take him to Helena.

[00:58:58] She didn't have to. When he came running away from Treblinka she could have said wow you escaped from Treblinka. That's amazing. Good luck to you. She could have done that. That would have been perfectly reasonable.

[00:59:12] But, she didn't. Everybody makes choices and like the choices that were made during the war by all these different people resulted in this family being being here on Earth today. And that's an amazing thing.

[00:59:27] And finally what I hope people think a little bit about after they read the book is that we all have families. We all have a family. I wrote this book about not my family. I wrote this book about Shlomo's family. We all have stories in our families that are important. They're all important. And I realized if I had waited even six months to go to Poland we would not have met Janina.

[00:59:54] And if I had waited a year we would not have met Jan. Don't wait.

[00:59:58] Ask the questions while there's still people to ask. Don't be shy with your questions. Push a little bit and get them down in writing on video and audio. Whichever way you can because you then have the stories to pass on. Every family has important stories. So I'm going to close. I'm going to bring this to a close in that I'm happy happy to take questions or we can just have a discussion or we can just sign books. That's all fine but I'm going to close with a short reading from the book about how I felt after after my trip to Poland. It was very confusing for me. I will tell you that. Here's what I wrote about, about how I felt. The Polish trip was a roller coaster ride from the horror of Majdanek to the joy of finding the Goldberg farm and by the teller from the darkness of Treblinka to the goodness of this Styś family from the disgust of Auschwitz-Birkenau to the promise of Poles reconnecting with their Judaism the entire time. Sam and Esther hovered whispering in my ear that they knew the truth that humans had the capacity for the greatest evil to torture and kill, to shoot people into a pit, to gas them to death, to burn their bodies and extract the gold from their teeth, to hunt them down in the forest for a kilo of sugar.

[01:01:24] But there was another truth that they also knew that humans have the highest capacity for kindness to give a fellow prisoner a cube of sugar, to hide and feed people as they're being hunted like animals, to cook food in a wash pot in Treblinka and bring it to the dying in the hospital, to stand up for someone else even in a death camp, to save others when it puts your own children in danger. I opened up to holding these contradictory thoughts in my mind at the same time and living with the tension that it creates. Before this trip I knew that I would discover new facts and meet new people but what I didn't know was that I would reach the dark matter of the human soul I now accept that humans are at once at once both evil and good. My work on Sam and Esther's story and my visit to Poland taught me that I can choose which side of my nature to express this is my new reality. Thank you all for coming. Applause

[01:02:32] Thank you. Thank you.

[01:02:35] I'm happy to take questions or or moderate a conversation. If you have questions. If you can speak into the microphone, this is being recorded for a podcast. Yeah.

[01:02:47] Could you comment on the process of I was at that museum in Israel and there is a Hall of the Righteous I think. I don't remember exactly what it was called. I think you had applied for some of these people to be in it. Thank you for asking.

[01:02:58] If you could summarize. That's right it's called the.

[01:03:00] There is a special honor that Yad Vashem gives to people and feel. Feel free if you need to leave. Feel free to go. Thank you for coming. There's a big honor that Yad Vashem bestows on people who are non-Jewish people who helped like the Styś during the war. There's a whole nominating process. It's actually all a huge process but as soon as I got home from that trip the first task I had and I'm a lawyer by training so I knew I had to put together a very good case. I worked. I worked for a month on putting together this packet of information to make the best case I could and I submitted it to Yad Vashem and the Styś family, Helena's family. I tried for both families but only Helena's family received the honor and I was really they were. And family didn't get it and they were so they're still so upset but I don't really have a great explanation as to why except that in Sam and Esther's video interviews where I actually submitted those interviews they say that they they take the testimony of the survivors themselves like what comes out of their mouth as the highest level of testimony and evidence. And both Esther and Sam mentioned Helena a number of times but they didn't mention the other. She didn't mention other family now they mentioned it to their kids knew about the other family and like it was like it was clear that this family was involved but they didn't get the honor. But the Styś family though at least like if you look in the database of the Righteous Among the Nations Styś is there. So like I feel like for future generations going forward it will be it's it's there.

[01:04:37] So yeah I did that. Thank you.

[01:04:45] Thank you for that.

[01:04:47] First of all I want to say that the TV show Survivor is bullshit compared to this. No you know what real survival is about.

[01:05:02] Also you know I'm finding that like as I get older I'm like learning about like real history and I'm ashamed to say that like I mean I've always heard about the Holocaust but never really knew what it was or what it entailed until three years ago a friend of mine introduced me to a book called *The Man's Search for Meaning* by Viktor Frankl which I listened to on audio and I have to say that I had to constantly like pause it just because like I couldn't believe what I was hearing and I just cried because I was like Oh my God.

[01:05:45] And to know that as you said earlier in your presentation that this was just 70 something years ago not that long ago.

[01:05:54] Wait.

[01:05:56] How could the whole world know that this is going on and kind of let it go on. You know I guess my one of my questions is like why didn't it stop? Or, if somebody intervened

after six hundred or six thousand six hundred thousand why did it have to get to six million people being murdered.

[01:06:19] I cannot answer that question. Books written on that and that's why I guess there's so many books written about that.

[01:06:26] Yeah I mean that's just something I, a mind boggling, question. You know like wait.

[01:06:32] But I'm also I I didn't grow up religious and I know when I moved here to Seattle 15 15 years ago I didn't know what Jewish meant if it meant a people, a religion, a culture, a land as well.

[01:06:57] Or, all the above? Yeah yeah.

[01:06:59] But you know again you know thank public schooling for failing me and you know in so many ways but you know thanks to people like yourself for you know you know bringing this to light. And you know through film and book and lecture and and so forth but another thing you know like you were talking about 18 you know 18 days from today is Rosh Hashanah which is, how did you know that? I'm Jewish in here.

[01:07:30] Oh wow okay.

[01:07:32] No but that's a day of atonement. Well Yom Kippur is the day of atonement. Oh yeah yeah. Okay.

[01:07:40] But how do you like go through something like that and not be bitter or angry or hateful or vengeful or you know what I mean.

[01:07:55] I know we should love our enemies and so forth, but. I think that there there were a lot of people who survived the Holocaust and I think that each individual person handled all those really really complicated feelings differently. So I don't think you can put it into one basket I think that Esther and Sam I knew I knew well and Shlomo certainly knew them well Sam was a very happy person. Yeah. He was one of the happiest people I ever met. Esther was also happy. But she she had she had depressive periods where she was depressed about what happened she missed her family and all the terrible things that happened to her. And that was hard. And but overall they were they were happy people and they raised three wonderful children and retired to Miami and went swimming in the ocean and you know they just Holocaust survivors some of them they just went and they just they were survivors you know they just went on in their life they did what they needed to do to survive and they kept going as hard as that might have been sometimes for them.

[01:08:59] Yeah. And you also talked about making that pilgrimage to Poland and seeing that pit and being a person of African ancestry. I went to Ghana. That was my first. And I went to

these castles, slave castles and there's a doorway. That's called the Door of No Return. And I know what it's like to kind of go to a land. What did that feel like? There were no words to describe. Like seriously I I just to you know kind of reading something in a textbook or seen in a movie is one thing but actually being on the land I'm sure as you can attest it's something whole, wholly other different. Yeah. Well thank you for sharing that. Thank you.

[01:09:49] Good. Thanks. Oh Jewish Star thanks.

[01:09:56] Karen you know the book is wonderful but I didn't realize how wonderful it would be to hear you talk about it. Oh, thank you Ira. You kind of take our hand and walk us in to a very large story through the lives of two people and the people who love them and the people who took risks for them. And what I ask you the hard question which is the now so during the time that you were researching and I think you would actually sat down to write this was about the same time that people in Charlottesville were shouting Jews will not replace us. And we also know that on descent on our synagogues several weeks ago there was something on the doorway. But I wondered in particular at the time that you were writing in Charlottesville and people were marching without wearing hoods but out in the open things are being said out in the open things similar to what were being said in the prewar period. How did that strike you as you were writing this? How did you integrate that into your thoughts as you were headed along in this?

[01:10:58] Yeah I was pretty deep into really terrible anti-Semitism for three years. And so when it when it came that starkly into our backyard I mean Charlottesville is in our backyard but it's our it's our country it's our backyard it's our citizens our fellow citizens. And it was really hard to hear that and especially because they said like I think a lot of Americans had to google it or just didn't know what it meant when it went when they kept saying blood and soil, blood and soil, that Jews will not replace us. That was a phrase that that was used among Nazis because that concept of Aryans and of Aryans being the great powers of the world the ones who should control everything was all about the blood was about the blood.

[01:11:46] And it was about how they needed to control the land and the land and the blood were connected in in in creating this grand race of white Aryan people. And so like the fact that they were saying that was like well what are you. What are you even talking about? Like we live in a country where I feel like I we all needed to stand up which I think a lot of us did stand up and say you don't know what you're talking about.

[01:12:16] We live in a country that is full of diversity full of immigrants full of people of different races and of different colors and we're proud of that. And if you want to have a different country I feel like go. You can go go somewhere else like you want to be here but you're here so you better get used to this.

[01:12:32] And the problem then though is that it feels in the last, since Charlottesville, it felt it has felt that there's been this enabling and there's been this this space that's opened up in this

country in the media and in social media and even on TV and our president unfortunately who have just been enabling these racist and hatred bigoted people to be able to say what they maybe they thought privately out loud and it's not OK.

[01:13:05] And what we need. So it was a very upsetting. Obviously I had to google blood and soil. I didn't know what that was. But then I then I put it into the context of all the history that I had learned. And then I understood it. And then I was more upset of course but I think that I think even today with what happened at our synagogue and what's happened what happened in Pittsburgh was a shooting in a synagogue and incidents. It's terrible. We have to stand up and say this is not the country we're going to live in. And we have to choose again. I think it goes back to making our choices we are making choices and I kind of feel like part of my mission in giving these presentations is to bring this hatred to today and say in those days there were people like the Styś who stood up and said not in my backyard. And that's what I want it to be I want to be not in my backyard. And I guess I want to carry that message outward to it to as many people as I can. And I want to stand up and say no. Yeah it's upsetting. So but I do see my presentations and my book actually as a way to try to shout a little bit louder. Karen.

[01:14:15] I'm mesmerized and yeah it's incredible listening to you - although I read the book I heard you several times. Thank you again. Each time I learn so much. Thank you.

[01:14:28] I want to say that it's so incredibly important what you mentioned about each of us has a story and it's our mission while we're alive to take our stories out and talk loud because each of us has so much to say and we will enrich the history and today and the future. And with these stories we will not allow whatever evil happened happen again. And I can tell you I was raised and lived all my life in the Soviet Union and in Russia and the word Holocaust was to me as a Jew, a cultural Jew, because religion was not an option in the Soviet Union. So Holocaust as a word not even as a concept but as a word was not known even to me being university professor. We never used the word and clearly we didn't use the concept the word Jew and Jewish was kind of forbidden word.

[01:15:39] I would never use the word Jew in any lecture even talking about the Second World War.

[01:15:49] Yeah those were words which people in normal life quote unquote would not use. Then all of a sudden during the perestroika Holocaust education became fashionable because all the Western and Jews started giving money for Holocaust education. Wow. And during the Yeltsin time Holocaust education became everyone's mission and it was in publications. It was everywhere. And then the money was gone and the fashion was dead.

[01:16:30] Wow. Yeah.

[01:16:33] And I'm I'm thinking about *21 Lessons for the 21st Century* by Harari this famous famous book by Israeli historian and it is so very important he is talking in the beginning of the book. He's talking about each one's stories and stories are very simple. But if teachers managed to connect with students through stories if all of us as humanity manages to connect through our human stories story like you did is incredible.

[01:17:09] But each of us has then definitely we will better this world. And then presidents like what we have now would never happen again hopefully. But that's I think that's the beauty of what you did. You brought in not only just the story but the example how it should be done and how everyone can do so. Thank you thank you

[01:17:38] Thank you very much. I was very deeply affected by what you said and what other people have said also. In fact it reminded me of being in a Graz, Austria. And people were putting me up and they knew I'd come from Israel where I've lived for five years. And the woman said something about some Israelis you know Israelites and I said Oh where are they from in Israel. And she said oh they're not from Israel they're, and she, this was maybe 10 years ago in Austria, she said she was reluctant to use the word Jewish. These were Jews. And so the word that they used as a euphemism actually was Israelites. That's what your story touched me on. But I'd like to say something else about my own personal struggle on this kind of issue. I've been to Auschwitz twice for five day retreats with Bernie, Europe roshi, Bernie Glassman and his group and I happened to be reading a book that it's very interesting for me is by Etty Hillesum. Etty Hillesum is a Jew from Amsterdam who was 26 years old when Anne Frank was 16 years old. And Etty Hillesum was also writing a diary and when her book reached the publisher finally it became a bestseller in Amsterdam. In all of Holland and then in 20 different countries the book is called an Interrupted *An Interrupted Life* and the page that stopped me short. When she talked about the poison it was in the air in Amsterdam the poison of hatred against the Germans.

[01:19:38] She's a Jewish woman who eventually died in a concentration camp and she says this hatred poisons the atmosphere for everybody. And so I think the question for me that I think about a lot is how not to hate somebody who does something very terrible does, bad things. And the example of what's possible for me is this for a short story of a monk, a senior monk who came out of Tibet. And when that happens they always meet with the Dalai Lama and the Dalai Lama asked this man when you were in the prison in the Chinese prison in Tibet. Were you ever afraid? And he said yes I was afraid. In the, the Dalai Lama asked him what were you afraid of? And he said I was afraid of losing my kindness for my jailers. Wow. Now that's a level of spiritual development that I think we need in the world because in other place in the book Etty Hillesum is wise enough to say that adding hatred against anyone simply adds more hatred to the world and we're in a stage right now where a lot of my friends for example hate our president or hate people that support him. And clearly there are people that are supportive of the president who hate others hate me perhaps.

[01:21:19] So I think that's the spiritual task that the Holocaust and similar events bring bring to my mind and if I don't know if I've gone on too long. Go ahead. So say a couple more things that come to my mind. If we don't do that and don't. If we encourage people you have a right to hate. You have a right to be angry. In Israel where I lived for five years. There are plenty of people in Israel who are traumatized who are the still maybe survivors of the Holocaust or the children of survivors of the Holocaust and they are traumatized and like traumatized people everywhere who have not overcome their trauma. And what I've been talking about I think is maybe the one necessary way I can believe to overcome your trauma is they turn around and behave badly towards people they see as their enemies and those people can be Arabs Palestinians or they can be other Jews who are in a different party or a different view like the Jew who killed [inaudible].

[01:22:46] One more thing just to bring it home and that's the end of what I have to say which is about close to 25 years ago it's a story I don't want need to get into but I read in the New England Journal of Medicine a story in the first in 1992 was published in the first two thirds of the first year after the first Gulf War. The survey done by our doctors from Harvard and Johns Hopkins and Oxford reported in The New England Journal that the number of deaths of children under the age of five that we estimate died as a consequence of the embargo against Iraqi people which included medicines which I know for sure and because of we bombed the all the electrical plants which shut off the waterworks the pumping of water and processing of sewage. The number of deaths that occurred that wouldn't have occurred in eight months is forty six thousand nine hundred deaths. So I think we all need to know that because that number is so shocking it shocked me and caused me to go over to Iraq bringing medicines to the children there. That was my illegal act. I'm proud of and my mother would say don't do that. You're putting yourself at risk. And I say didn't we always give credit to the German Jew German nun Jews and the other people who did things to help and put their own lives at risk. And I was just risking twelve years in jail which never happened.

[01:24:40] Wow thank you so much for sharing so so.

[01:24:44] Wow thank you. Bring it home. Thank you. With that we'll bring it home and pull this to a close and I'm happy to sign books that people want. Anyone to buy a book. Otherwise I thank you all very very much for coming and sharing. Now you are all part of Sam and Esther's story, and our story and thank you for being part of it.

[01:25:06] This podcast was presented by the Seattle Public Library and Foundation and made possible by your contributions to the Seattle Public Library Foundation. Thanks for listening.