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Holocaust Survivors of South Jersey Project - Teaching Resources

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**The following letter was written to Rosalie Simon from a Stockton University student. The student's name has been redacted for privacy purposes. The letter that follows is Rosalie Simon's response to that student.**

Dear Rosalie,

First let me tell you how truly thankful I was that you came to our class and told your story. I can never understand how difficult it must have been for you to relive all that while you spoke, but it really meant a lot. So, thank you!

What I have to say will be hard to read but please read all of it, because I feel the need to redeem myself. My grandmother is "off the boat German" She was a Christian and grew up during WWII. I grew up very close to her and loved her dearly. However, because we are so close it was only natural that her beliefs and life lessons rubbed on me.

I grew up believing every word.

I took Holocaust and Genocide studies merely because I needed the class to graduate not because I truly believed in what we would be learning. I can honestly say that every Wednesday at 4:30 to 8:20 p.m. I sat in true horror. I now know the truth and I am ashamed that I believed the foolishness that was drilled into me. I had no idea that such things happened to you and your people, but know now,, with my new found knowledge I want to help and teach people so this never happens again!

I want to apologize, I feel guilty for believing my grandmother and I also feel guilty that I am related to such an ignorant person. Do not get me wrong, she is my grandmother and I will always love her, however, I feel like because my grandmother gave into what Hitler was selling, my family is directly responsible for what happened to you. I truly am sorry for all that you went through and for what your family has been through. I hope you can find it in your heart to forgive all of us! And please know that now there are people in this world who want to help you and who are now upstanders and not bystanders!

May God bless you!

[Redacted Signature]

Dear [REDACTED]

It is hard to put into words how meaningful and rewarding it was for me to read your letter - it moved me to tears. I can only imagine how difficult it must have been for you to write it, and to express true feelings, it shows courage on your part. Please, do not apologize for believing your grandmother, it is not your fault - anybody in your place would believe the same under the circumstances. I want you to know that I forgive you for everything. It gives me satisfaction to know that I was able to have such an impact on someone by my speaking at Stockton College. It meant everything to me.

It is because of young people like you that I'm inspired to speak out about the Holocaust, no matter how painful the memories may be. The credit also goes to Stockton College, particularly Professor Gail Rosenthal and Dr Maryann McLoughlin for bringing awareness in their Holocaust studies.

[REDACTED] - I believe in you, and I am confident that in the future you will show as an example to others, and you will be an upstander not a bystander as you quoted in your letter, should a situation ever arise.

I only wish there would be more people like you, this world would be a better place. I have never met you, although I would like to. I want to give you a great big hug and tell you that you have earned my greatest respect and admiration.

With all my love and all my best wishes for a bright and happy future,

Rosalie Simon