

National Days of Remembrance

SAMPLE QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Since every Holocaust survivor's experience was unique, the interviewer should talk with the survivor before the event to get a sense of his or her experiences. The questions below provide a framework for the kinds of question one may ask in an interview with a Holocaust survivor.

1. Please describe your life before the Holocaust.
 - What was your family like? Did you have a large extended family? How many siblings did you have?
 - Was your family religious?
 - What did your parents do for a living?
 - What was your community like? Did you have many non-Jewish friends?
2. Do you remember experiencing antisemitism when you were growing up?
3. How did life change when the Nazis came to power? (for a German survivor); What do you remember about *Kristallnacht*, “Night of Broken Glass”? (for a German or Austrian survivor)
4. What was school like after the Nazis and their allies took control?
5. What do you remember about the German invasion? (if appropriate)
6. Did your family try to emigrate in the 1930s? Why didn't you leave?
7. Did you live in a ghetto? If so, please talk about your life there. Did you go to school in the ghetto? Did you have to work in the ghetto?
8. How did you cope emotionally with your Holocaust experiences? What kept you going day to day in the ghetto, camp, or other place where you lived? How did you maintain hope?
9. If you were deported, please tell us about that experience.
10. If you lived in a concentration camp, what kind of work did you do? What kind of conditions did you work under? Describe a typical day there.
11. How did the Holocaust influence your faith? Can you say whether it strengthened or weakened your faith?
12. Did you have to cope with hunger? If so, please describe how you did so.
13. Did you form friendships in the ghetto or camp?
14. Did you encounter any Nazis, Germans, or others who tried to help you?

15. Were you with your family throughout the Holocaust or were you separated?
16. Were you liberated by the Allied troops? If so, how did the American/Russian/British soldiers treat you?
17. How did you cope with losing family and friends?
18. How did you start your life again after the Holocaust? What was your experience when you came to the United States (or other new home)?
19. After the war were you able to learn what happened to the rest of your family?
20. How do you feel about Germans and Germany today?
21. What message would you like to leave with the people here? What would you like people to remember about you and your experiences? How should people respond to genocide and human rights violations today?
22. When did you begin speaking about the Holocaust? Why did you decide to speak?
23. Are you able to say what you thought of humanity at the end of the Holocaust? Have your views changed in the years since the Holocaust and, if so, in what ways?
24. What do you believe we can do to fight indifference, hatred, racism, and antisemitism today?
25. As a result of all that you experienced, both during and since the Holocaust, and know about this world, are you optimistic about the future?