

Chelsea Walton

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Mira Kimmelman Essay Contest

In the book, *Echoes from the Holocaust a Memoir*, written by Mira Ryczke Kimmelman, a survivor of the Holocaust, who faced many hardships throughout her life. The book tells her account of true events that she faced during World War II in the Holocaust. Her story should be preserved and taught to people to inform them about the true, horrific atrocities committed by the Nazis. The annihilation of more than 11 million people left an impact on many, even today, whether it be the survivors, or the close family members and friends who have lost loved ones in due to the holocaust. They shall never be forgotten! Mrs. Kimmelman bravely persevered through all of the challenges in the concentration camps. No matter the circumstances, from the separation of her family members and close loved ones or living in a constant state of fear about not knowing what is going to occur next in her life. She was a very kind and determined woman, she took many risks for herself and others even knowing it could have caused her death.

Foremost, Mrs. Kimmelman was a person who was not afraid to take risks. When Mrs. Kimmelman's family moved to Tomaszow Mazowiecki, Poland, they were soon ordered to live there in a ghetto. This was the last place she was with her whole family. At this time, Jews of the Tomaszow Mazowiecki ghetto were marched in columns toward east, the actual location being the Treblinka death camp. As they walked, she was taken out of the column by an SS officer so quickly that she was not able to say goodbye to her mother. After this, she was united with her father and brother in a factory along with many others who had been brought to the same place.

They were ordered to stay in the downstairs area of the building. This factory happened to be the place Mrs. Kimmelman and her family stayed the night before the march; she remembered leaving a watch that her parents had bought her when they lived in Danzig, prior to the war. The watch was upstairs where they were forbidden to go. However, she had a feeling that she needed it and bravely took the chance to go upstairs. Once she retrieved the watch, she was caught by a SS guard who beat her. Still, she endured by thinking about her mother and other family members who were gone. Soon, her father and brother, along with others who worked with them, were taken out of the factory so the others could sleep. When it was about time for her to go to sleep, a drunken Ukrainian soldier broke through the door, “He grabbed the kind and gentle Jewish ghetto “Ordnungsdienst” (policeman), a friend of mine named Mietek Hendeles... ‘Give me a tchasoy [watch] or I shoot him,” (Kimmelman 39). The risk Mrs. Kimmelman took by recovering the watch turned out to be useful and even saved the life of a friend. She had a courageous mindset and endured through troubles when she felt something was important. As a result, Mrs. Kimmelman was an altruistic person, she helped others out even if it would cost her life.

Furthermore, it is important to notice that her message in the book remains the same... always keep trying no matter what. All throughout Mrs. Kimmelman’s life she faced many terrible circumstances, but she never gave up. An example of her tenacity was when she arrived at Auschwitz-Birkenau, her father had given her a soup can to store photos and important information that she could keep with her as a memory of him while they were separated. When Mrs. Kimmelman arrived at the Birkenau bath house, “I was stopped at the door by a SS woman. “What are you carrying? You are not aloud [sic] to take anything with you!” were her words. Without hesitating, looking straight at her, I said, “My soup. I have soup in the canteen,”

(Kimmelman 61). This shows that she kept trying her best for her family even when they were apart. She lied without any delay about what was in the canteen, and this could have gotten her killed. The documents inside of the can were vital for her remaining family after the war, by verifying that they were Jewish and helping them find each other. Overall, Mrs. Kimmelman used the can of soup filled with important papers and photos as motivation to keep going, and for remembrance of her family. Mrs. Kimmelman never gave up especially when it came to keeping promises; she was a determined woman who put her family and friends first.

Next, students today can relate to Mrs. Kimmelman because of her respect and empathy for others even if they have wronged her. In school, students are with many different people for the whole day, and of course it is natural that a person cannot agree with everybody in their school. However, this does not mean that just because a person disagrees or has wronged another that everyone else is just like them. After the war, Mrs. Kimmelman states, "In spite of all the evil and cruel experiences, I also saw the goodness of people. Friends and relatives were saved by Poles, Germans, French, and Dutch. Some of the rescuers were uneducated peasants, some were educated people, but all listened to their hearts even when they put themselves in danger," (Kimmelman 165). Mrs. Kimmelman was a very good-hearted person for seeing the good in people, this can be a very difficult task sometimes. Some students today think arguing or violence is the better way to solve problems; but it is not because every student in that building has the same feelings; they are human too. Violence leaves a bad impression and creates more conflict, so it is better to just acknowledge the disagreement and still respect them. Mrs. Kimmelman showed great consideration to people all around her because she admired everything they had done to help her no matter who they were. As a result, students can relate to Mrs. Kimmelman, and learn from her example of kindness.

In conclusion, Mrs. Kimmelman stayed strong throughout her whole life. She had been separated from her family without even being able to say goodbye, she never knew what was to come next, but still she stayed determined to live and take risks for herself and others. Her instincts guided her to go back for the watch, and that saved someone's life. When she was in Auschwitz-Birkenau, she tried her best to keep the can of pictures safe and succeeded. Mrs. Kimmelman was also a very compassionate and forgiving person; she always saw the best in people no matter who they were. It is important to read her story because it can bring change and awareness to people regarding what happened during the Holocaust. It should never be forgotten that so many innocent people went through years of inhumane suffering and death. Readers should share her story and encourage them to share it with others as well. Conversations like these could be the reason for changing the future world, so it never happens again.