

Welcoming Remarks

Child Survivors of the Holocaust Roundtable

Mary V. Sussillo: On behalf of the editorial board of the journal, *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, our readers, and our committee, Dr. Shelly Itzkowitz, Anja Behm and me, Mary Sussillo, we'd like to welcome and thank the panel for making yourselves available to be part of the Child Survivors of the Holocaust Roundtable.

We who are gathered here today share in common a connection, either directly or indirectly, to one of history's darkest and most malevolent periods, a time when a totalitarian regime sought to purify their race by the destruction of those who were different. The Nazis and their leaders systematically planned to carry out the complete and total extinction of Europe's Jewish population and others deemed "unfit to live". Labeling Jews as subhuman and evil, Adolph Hitler galvanized his followers to implement the unprecedented "Final Solution".

Fortunately for us today, the Nazi regime was defeated and stopped short of their stated goal; however, not before six million innocent men, women, and children were brutally killed for no reason other than their Jewish heritage. Of these six million, one and a half million were children.

Our four panelists are among the small fraction of Jewish children from Western and Eastern Europe who, against all odds, survived the Nazis. They and their families were either interned in concentration camps, hidden and raised in Christian homes and orphanages, or hidden by acquiring papers documenting their religion as Christian, and living with their new identities.

You, our panelists, are here today to bear witness to those utterly reprehensible efforts by the Nazis and their collaborators in seeking to carry out Hitler's genocidal plan. Ironically, almost one month ago to the day, the government of Iran sponsored a conference in an effort to deny and reshape history by repudiating the Holocaust.

In our Roundtable forum, we will be talking with our panelists about how their early massive trauma shaped them as people, and *how* they survived unimaginable and extreme terror and tribulation in childhood. Instead of perpetuating hate, they have become therapeutic agents for other Holocaust child survivors and their families, and for other victims of massive psychic trauma.

Additionally, we will explore their process of personal healing through psychoanalysis and other means, with a special emphasis on which aspects of the therapeutic relationship were instrumental in helping them to establish trust and to integrate their past with their evolving selves. Thus, our panelists will be talking from "both sides of the couch," from the perspective of the patient and the perspective of the analyst.

In our roundtable discussion the term "child survivor" refers to any Jewish child under the age of 17 who survived in Nazi-occupied Europe by whatever means.

As we begin our discussion today, we acknowledge that our panelists learned the art of hiding and keeping secrets to avoid certain death. Silence, keeping things to oneself, became an organizing principle in the lives of many of the survivors. The concept of hiding to stay alive, on concrete and psychic levels, will be a leitmotif in our dialogue. It is an act of personal courage for our panelists to speak out today about their experiences.

And now, my colleague, Dr. Shelly Itzkowitz, who is the co-editor of *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, will say a few words and introduce the panel.

Introduction

Sheldon Itzkowitz: This project evolved as collaboration between Dr. Eva Metzger Brown, one of our Roundtable panelists, and the editors of *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*. Our journal is sponsored by the National Institute of the Psychotherapies Training Institute in New York City and the National Institute for the Psychotherapies Professional Association, whose joint financial support has been instrumental in the publication of the journal and in our current endeavor with our panel. Subsequent to Dr. Brown's submission of her moving paper entitled, "A Child Survivor of the Holocaust Comes Out of Hiding: Two Stories of Trauma", a dialogue ensued about extending the paper's vitality and reach by creating the present forum.

And now to introduce the panelists: Dr. Eva Metzger Brown, child survivor, clinical psychologist; Founder, Project: Intergenerational Healing in Holocaust Families, University of Massachusetts; author of "A Child Survivor of the Holocaust Comes Out of Hiding: A Story of Two Trauma," published in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives* (this issue) and other articles.

Dr. Dori Laub, child survivor and psychiatrist, Clinical Professor, Yale University Department of Psychiatry; Co-founder of the Fortunoff Video Archives for Holocaust Testimonies; co-author with Shoshanna Felman of their book, "Testimony—Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History" (1992, New York/London: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, inc.); and author of numerous articles on massive trauma and the Holocaust.

Dr. Clemens Loew, child survivor and psychoanalyst, co-founder and member of the Board of Directors, the National Institute for the Psychotherapies Training Institute; supervisor, N.I.P.; and author of "the Apron" published in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, (this issue). He is also the creator of the exhibition "Post Script: The Last Witnesses," which took place from October 30 to December 15, 2006, at New York's Cathedral of St. John the Divine.

And, last but not least, Dr. Sophia Richman child survivor and psychoanalyst; supervisor, the New York University Post-Doctoral Program in Psychotherapy and Psychoanalysis; supervisor and training analyst, the Contemporary Center for Advanced Psychoanalytic

Studies at Fairleigh Dickinson University; and author of *A Wolf in the Attic: The Legacy of a Hidden Child of the Holocaust* (2002, Haworth Press).

The Survivors' Experience

MS: And now for our first question...

To read this engaging roundtable discussion in its entirety, please use our easy printable order form to request this issue (Volume 4 #2) of Psychoanalytic Perspectives TODAY!