

Hatred...

A Brief Response by George Heller

I just finished my talk, and now it was the students' turn. The notes I used were the sets of twenty questions each of the students gave me before the class started.

Question:

"How can you not hate those who inflicted unbelievable pain on you, killed most of your family, made you homeless and almost killed you? I am confused!"

Answer:

"Hatred is a very destructive behavior. It destroys the hater, not the hated. When you hate someone you are focused on your hatred. It is hatred that occupies your mind and your thoughts. You deprive yourself of the opportunity to spend your time enjoying life. The person you hate may not even know he is hated. I chose to spend my time rebuilding my life."

"You don't have to forget or forgive what happened to you. But life continues from this day forward. You have a choice."

I am a survivor of the Holocaust. This interchange took place at the end of a talk I gave at Sequoia High school in Redwood City California in May 2003. The students prepared an exhibit of what they learned. The photograph shows part of that exhibit.



George Heller, Holocaust Survivor

Quotes from an Oral History Interview

By the Students in Jessica Mass'

9th Grade Language Arts Class

"We have little control of the events around us but we can control the way we react."

"Hate will ruin your life."

"Terrible things happen but they don't have to be the end - they can be the beginning."