Never Forget
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Teacher: Jessica Naudin
Survivor: Henri Nisenhole

It was the year 1931 and roughly around midnight when Henri Nisenhole's brother, Simon, was having trouble breathing. Without the money for a doctor, Henri's father had to run to a police precinct for a night doctor. The doctor came, but upon discovering that they were Jews, he left in disgust. A few days later, in the hospital, Simon died. That was the night eight-year-old Henri understood who he was to the world.

Growing up in a poor Jewish household, Nisenhole experienced public discrimination. Especially in school, the teachers would always find ways to belittle his success by comparing him to the non-Jewish students. Nisenhole's teacher would encourage him to give up and let the "good" children pass as he would be wasting time studying. But even after passing his exams, his teacher was upset because "good" students had failed and needed to repeat another year. Nisenhole concluded that no matter what he accomplished, he would always be unacknowledged just because he was a Jew.

Nisenhole's memories hold a special place in his heart. These acts of antisemitism, or hatred towards Jews, that he experienced at an early age were so prominent to him because it was a symbol both of what he went through and who he was seen to be.. In his video testimony, Niseonhole shares that he was not bothered by this mistreatment. In fact, he explains that these experiences were what told him to *never forget* that he is a Jew.

By embracing his heritage, he was able to endure through the Holocaust and be resilient. His unwavering sense of self tells me that he knew his value as a person, which is why he was not concerned about the degrading opinions others had of him. . He knows that he is a Jew and he is proud of it.

That overflowing confidence in his identity is enlightening to me. Perhaps the fact that I grew up moving around and learning to adjust to new environments made me lose a sense of self. It felt as if I was throwing away my previous life to start a new one. Nisenhole's story shifted something in me. It told me that I should not let societal norms mold me into someone I'm not, but instead, I should let society adjust to the person I choose to be.

Nisenhole was always more than only a Jew. He was a brother, a student, and a friend. . He had his own set of memories, just like everyone else, and he knew that. He didn't need to care about how others labeled him because he could define himself.

So if I stay true to myself, I can also be sure of who I am. That's the only way a person can truly find and be themselves whether it was during the Holocaust or in our conformity driven culture today.