

Children's advocate and bestselling author Trudy Ludwig could not personally be here today to speak before this esteemed committee, as she is currently out of town with speaking engagements. However, she has asked that I share with you her following statement:

When my son was in middle school in the Beaverton School District, some 7th graders were saying that the Holocaust was a lie, that it never happened, and they called other students "dirty Jews." I and another parent were livid when we heard about this, so we met with the school principal to express our concerns. The principal, who was just as horrified as we were about the situation, readily agreed to our suggestion of inviting a Holocaust survivor from the Oregon Holocaust Resource Center to speak to the students.

A few weeks later, I was given the honor of transporting Alter Wiener to my son's school. His heartfelt talk about what he had experienced as a teen survivor of five prison labor camps had a profound effect not only on the students but also on me, which resulted in my writing, with Alter's blessing, the children's picture book GIFTS FROM THE ENEMY based on Alter's autobiography. I wrote this story to educate young students in an age-appropriate way on the dangers and senselessness of hatred, stereotyping, and prejudice.

Mr. Wiener and his fellow Holocaust survivors residing here in Oregon didn't let the horrendous traumas and losses they went through in their lives deter them from their ongoing mission in life: to educate and encourage youth and adults to do better, to be better, in how they treat their fellow human beings—regardless of race / ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political or religious beliefs. One of the most important takeaways I've personally gotten from learning

more about the Holocaust is the timeless and universal fact that there are the kind and the cruel in EVERY group of people. How someone treats you is far, far more important than who they are.

It is crucial, now more than ever before, for Holocaust survivors' important messages of social justice not to be silenced when they are no longer able to share their life experiences themselves. A history forgotten leads to a history repeated. Oregon students need to be educated in an age-appropriate way about this well-documented period in world history. In so doing, they will learn from the experiences of others and never give up hope in their efforts to make this world a better, more caring place for all.

*“If we are to reach real peace in this world,
we shall have to begin with the children.”*

—Mahatma Gandhi

Respectfully,

Trudy Ludwig

Children's Author & Advocate