

# Children Who Survived the Final Solution

*By Twenty-Six Survivors  
Edited by Peter Tarjan*

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# *Foreword*

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## *Anthology of Child Survivors of the Holocaust in South Florida*

This anthology of the South Florida Child Survivors of the Holocaust group is a reminder of the one and a half million Jewish children who were killed in Nazi occupied Europe, and who comprised 90% of Jewish children at the time. The greatest might of the German war machine was directed to the extermination of this most vulnerable group. Those who survived, like the writers of this anthology, did so through extraordinary luck, pluck and devotion—their own and those of others.

It took forty-five years for child survivors of the Holocaust around the world to start to realise the magnitude of their survivorship, and to own the details of their experiences as real, valid, and able to be talked about. Child survivors started to remember, feel, and understand, and share, in a new vivid way. What helped them enormously was recognition of others like themselves, and sharing their experiences in child survivor groups. They developed a feeling of mishpocha in those groups, because they could speak freely to those who understood them. One such group is the South Florida Child Survivors of the Holocaust group. This is their anthology, on the occasion of their Bar/Bat-Mitzvah.

Bar/Bat-Mitzvah symbolises a coming of age, a declaration of identity. What identity do child survivors in their sixties and seventies declare on their Bar/Bat-Mitzvahs? When most of the child survivors in this anthology were thirteen, their worlds and identities were shattered. What are they declaring now, at their belated coming of age?

The stories in this anthology may seem to be the antithesis of a source of celebration. Instead, the reader will find evidence that children were spared nothing in the Holocaust. The stories will describe children separated from parents to be sent to safe, though not nurturing countries; of children who survived concentration camps; children who were hidden; children who survived starvation, ghettoes, bullets, bombs, murder, separation, everything the Shoah threw at adults.

The children in their vulnerability, if it is possible to imagine, suffered even more. I wanted to highlight individual stories—of older and younger children, of this country, and that, this experience, and the other. But no, they are all equally amazing and sacred stories.

I was struck by the fact that the stories were not bitter, they did not seek revenge. I found the underlying thread in the purpose of the stories to be gifts to the world, given in the hope that the stories and the anthology would contribute to other children not having to suffer such events in the future. The gifts were not easy to produce. The writers had to scrape from the depths of their souls.

The stories provide lessons to the world about childhood suffering, coping with it, its consequences short and long term, and its ripples across the generations. But for me, perhaps the most hidden but powerful underlying message is that of the power of love. The children in this book could not have survived without love-of love given them by parents, relatives and others; but also their own love-of parents, and hopes of future loving. They did everything to fulfill these hopes. They married, and above all, loved that precious commodity—children. Nothing produced more satisfaction than preserving and loving their children. Many now love their children's children too.

A thirteen-year-old child reads a story from the bible that was written thousands of years ago, and fits his or her identity into a prescribed group view. In this case, on their Bar/Bat-mitzvah, the child survivors of South Florida are presenting their own book of stories, with its own lessons and wisdom, to be added to the story of the Jewish people.

This anthology declares the power of life, human aspiration, love, and the creative power of telling the truth in words. It was a hard road to achieve this creation. To have reached it is cause to celebrate. It is for the reader now to become a partner in the purpose of this creation.

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1. Dr. Paul Valent, an Australian psychiatrist and child survivor, is the author of *Child Survivors of the Holocaust* [Brunner-Routledge, New York & London, 2002], a collection of critically edited interviews with ten members of a survivors' group in Australia.