

Thoughts and Prayers
FIRST DRAFT
By David Sommer

This Short play is based on the life experiences of Estelle Nadel a holocaust survivor. Some details have been changed for story-telling purposes. All the name's in this piece are the names of people from Estelle's life except Avraham and Shmuel which are names taken from the list of Jews killed in the Holocaust.

Estelle is one of the few Holocaust survivors still alive, able and willing to talk about her life. A special thanks to Estelle for her kindness and willingness to share her experience with the world through Stories That Live. These plays are meant to make us question how the Holocaust happened and how we let antisemitism pervade throughout our lives in the modern age.

Characters:

1940s	Now
Reuven (aba)	----- Ruben (dad)
Chaya (ima)	----- Hannah (mom)
Enia	----- Grandma
Yashic	----- Moshe (son)
Avraham	
Shmuel	

Scene 1: A prayer

OPENS WITH DAD PRAYING

Dad: Hashkiveinu Adonai Eloheinu
L'shalom
v'ha'amideinu malkeinu l'khayim tovim
Ul'shalom
uf'ros aleinu sukat sh'lomekha
v'takneinu b'eitzah tovah milfane'kha
V'hoshi'einu
m'heirah l'ma'an sh'mekha

Scene 2 Scary News:

Folks around a table in the Nadel Household. A father, a mother, two children Estelle and Yashic are playing in a corner, and at least 2-3 friends of the family

Avraham: Reuven have you heard? The town over. My brother says some of his friends have gone missing.

Reuven: What?!

Shmuel: yes, just one or two but when it happens in more than one town, all in recent times... a pattern begins to show.

Reuven: I am sure it is just some happenstance coincidence

Avraham: Coincidence? My sister's husband was grabbed off the street and never came home.

Shmuel: My brother's family had their windows smashed in. The violence against Jews is getting worse and worse .

Reuven: As long as we continue to pray to god we shall be okay. God has protected our people for thousands of years. And he will continue to do so... (trails off but continues talking)

Lights dim on the table as young Estelle comes forward and begins to speak. The adults babble behind her. The words are incomprehensible and muffled. The conversation is still happening behind Estelle, albeit unintelligible, because at the time it was unintelligible for Estelle.

Enia: Looking back on this memory, I can't quite remember what my father was saying. I could barely understand half of it when I was so young. One thing I do know is that my father wasn't worried during that conversation. His friends were, but he wasn't. He believed God would protect us and that as long as he continued to pray for our continual safety and peace, that everything would be alright. I try not to think about his disappointment when I remember that within the next couple days he was taken from us. And no that's not a euphemism for death. We thought they had been killed right then and there at his factory: Dad, his friends, my sister and brother Sonijia, and Moishe. No. They had been lined up. One line taken to go work in a ghetto. (Spits) The others taken to the camps. To Auschwitz (spits again). It wasn't till recent years that we found out what happened to them. Reading their names off the lists at the camp itself. I

always wonder why my dad had such faith in God. God who had already let Jews die in Poland. God who let the Jews slog through hardship for 5780 plus years, and all he's done is keep us alive to endure more. There is no protecting us. It feels more like keeping cattle safe so we can grow ripe and fat for the slaughter. I love my father, but I often wonder what would have happened if he had not sat around and done nothing. In reality I wonder what could happen if the Jews decided to rise up against our oppressors. Besides being vilified for defending ourselves, I do wonder...

A radio is heard as the lights fade out.

Scene 3: Modern Day Dinner

NPR's all things considered is heard and slowly fades as the lights come up on a family around a dinner table. Happy and light. A father, a mother, two brothers and two sisters and a grandmother. Dinner is happening normally. (click [here](#) to hear the radio segment)

Mom: So, what did you learn at school today?

Moshe: Uhm. The usual. Math. Science, History, nothing fun. Oh! But we are learning about the Holocaust! Grandma you're old, were you there?!

The radio suddenly gets louder and stats from a different NPR article are heard. Everyone freezes

V.O.(pre recorded by a cast member):

"According to the latest ADL analysis, surges in each of the major audit categories occurred in all 50 states and Washington, D.C.

Antisemitic harassment increased 29%, from 1,776 to 2,298

Antisemitic vandalism increased 51%, from 853 to 1,288

Antisemitic assaults increased 26%, from 88 to 111

The ADL concluded the massive uptick in the spread of anti-Jewish propaganda was "largely due to the growth of the Goyim Defense League," known as the GDL.

The GDL network, which has significant crossover with other white supremacist groups and movements, was responsible for at least 492 propaganda incidents in 2022, a dramatic increase from the 74 recorded in 2021. (Romo 2023)"

Everyone unfreezes. Mom and Dad share a look.

Bubbie: Actually now that you mention it I did/

Dad: *ahem* Mom, could you pass the potatoes. Moshe, I don't think now is a good time to ask Bubbie about.. the past. It's not exactly table talk, ask her another/

Bubbie: Well now's as good a time as any! Is there ever a right time to talk about genocide Reuven?

Dad: No Mom you're not wrong, but right now at the dinner table it's just not/

Bubbie: Sha!* None of that now. There is no good time and now the topic has been broached, best get on with it then. Now yes Mo. Bubbie was alive during the Holocaust, but I was only seven at the time. I'm not too old yet that I've started to forget things.

Moshe: You were seven?! How do you remember anything from then? I barely remember breakfast from yesterday.

Mom: I made you pancakes!

Bubbie: Never mind that, the life I've lived is not one that can be easily forgotten, Moshe. I remember when my dad had a meeting and told people god would protect us. I remember when we sat idly by until the day they came and started taking us away. How quickly we took action then... only it was too little too late. The Nazis were there to stay.

Moshe: Yes.. but the Nazis are all gone now right?

Bubbie: Oh Mo if only that were so. Haven't you been listening to the news? Nazis not only still exist, their numbers are growing. Antisemitism is only getting worse these days and once again us Jews are sitting on our hands hoping someone else will tell them to fuck off/

Mom: Mom! Language!

Bubbie: Sha Sha it's nothing he hasn't heard before and besides when we discuss adult things, we discuss it like adults.

Moshe: But you were so young then

Bubbie: Never mind that. All there is to know is that the Holocaust may be in the past. But anti semitism is most certainly still here and will continue to be here till the Jews stop being afraid of their own might and actually decide to do something about the Neo-Nazis who are still hard for their own white supremacy and degradation of Jews, blacks, gays, really anyone who isn't white. Don't they teach you all this in school??

Moshe: Well kind of... I obviously knew about the Holocaust, and I guess Mr. Kaufman did mention that the world is still feeling its effects today, but I didn't realize what exactly was going on I guess. Mr. Kaufman did also say that they're changing the curriculum and they might not teach the grade after us about the Holocaust at all.

Mom, Dad, Bubbie: WHAT?!?!

Moshe: (a little scared by their reaction) yeah, something about how our state does require it, so the school board made a decision.

Mom: Someone needs to start a petition! Or make a law!

Dad: What kind of world can we live in that world history isn't being taught. I mean, we already know most of America's history has been erased and rewritten, but something needs to be done. If we can't stop the neo nazis in their tracks, we can stop kids from becoming neo nazis.

Bubbie: Okay, (looking at Moshe) but what are we actually going to do about it.

Moshe: ... I don't know

Bubbie: Well that's lovely and all: a petition, a law, words on the air. But what are we actually going to do about it? In some places it's never been taught. Most of the world likes to forget it happened. So I'll ask again:

What.

Are.

YOU.

Going to Do about it.

Moshe: I

Don't know.

End.

Romo, Vanessa. "Antisemitic Incidents Are at an All-Time High, the ADL Reports." *NPR*, NPR, 24 Mar. 2023, <https://www.npr.org/2023/03/23/1165737405/antisemitism-statistics-report-2022-anti-defamation-league>.