

The Holocaust Historiography Project

Remarkable Nonsense about the Holocaust

Yet Another Witness

Survivor is more than a number

Dario Gabbai, who was interned at Auschwitz, shares painful memories with Chaffey class.

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<http://www.latimes.com/news/local/clv/la-clv-genocide09apr09,1,5938701.story?coll=la-tcn-clv-news>

"182568."

The teary-eyed man recited the number quickly and without looking, dejectedly revealing to a startled Chaffey College class last Friday why it's tattooed on his left arm.

"I tell my story because there's very few left anymore who can tell it," he said.

An Auschwitz survivor, Dario Gabbai doesn't feel like just a number anymore. But the fact he still bears one reminds him of other numbers -- the estimated 6 million people slaughtered under the Nazi regime; the 54,000 Jews herded like cattle from his hometown of Salonika, Greece, to the Auschwitz labor and death camp in 1944, and the **12,000 people killed there every day**, including his own mother and sister.

And at 82, the Italian-Greek Jew still feels he had a hand in unspeakable evils.

With the German Security Service aiming a gun at his back at all times, Gabbai was forced to assist the Nazis in their extermination of Jews at the nearby Auschwitz-Birkenau labor and death camp.

"There was no choice," he said. "If you didn't do it, the guy behind you was going to kill you. That's it."

As sonderkommandos in Birkenau during World War II, Gabbai and his two cousins ushered Hungarian Jews into gas chambers disguised as "showers," removed the bodies after the Zyklon-B poisoned gas aired out and discarded them into crematoriums in order to dispose of the evidence of Nazi crimes.

He said, at times, close to **2,000 people packed into gas chambers with capacities of 500**. Gabbai tried to make the best of an impossible situation, though, going as far as **telling those who were about to die exactly where they should move inside the chamber so they could die quickly with the least amount of suffering**.

[...]

"Did you ever wish you were the one being killed?" one student asked him.

"Yeah," he said immediately. "Many times."

[...]

Send all questions and comments to webmaster@historiography-project.org.