



Video Story Transcript

AFTERNOON WITH RACHEL, HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR

By: Storyteller Gene Tagaban
<http://www.storytellingraven.com/>

Link to YouTube Video:
<https://youtu.be/-RLACE88jn0>

Note : The following is a transcription of a spoken story performance and may not reflect textbook perfect English. It will guide you as you listen (or read) along.

Gunalchéesh! My name is Gene Tagaban. My Tlingit name is Guy Yaaw. I'm of the Takdeintaan clan. The Raven, Fresh Water Sockeye clan from Hoonah, Alaska. I'm a child of a Wooshkeetaan, Eagle, Shark clan Káawu hoonah in Juneau, Alaska and I'm a Tlingit, Cherokee and Filipino. I'm a Cherotlingopino and it's wonderful to be here to share stories with you. I'd like to share a story about an experience I had. Oftentimes, we have these moments in our lives that are just pivotal. They make a shift within your being, your spirit and out to your soul.

So I was traveling to an event, another storytelling event in Omaha, NE. You know, at first I didn't want to go really to Omaha, NE. I'm from Juneau, Alaska – mountains, water! Omaha, NE? Flat, corn. But I was going there for a storytelling festival and I was being housed by a wonderful family so I got there. And the next morning, she asked me (our host), "Every Thursday we always take Rachel out to the market. Would you like to go?"

I said, "Sure, I'll go."

"Now I want to tell you this. Rachel is a survivor of Auschwitz, the holocaust."

I thought to myself, "Wow!"

"Yes, I'd love to meet Rachel!" And so when we took a... pick up Rachel and Rachel is this elderly lady. She came, maybe, up to my shoulder. She had sunglasses on and she walked up to me. She didn't say much, just looked at me. I opened the door for her and she hopped in and we sat in the back seat.

She said, "I want to go to the market to get apples. I want to make some pie. One of the only things I have left is the recipe from my momma – Apple Pie. They were bakers, you know!"

And so we went to the market to get apples and she was very meticulous about her apples. They couldn't be too big or too small. She went through them. I carried the bag for her as she placed them in. She didn't say a word to me. She looked at the apples, put 'em in the bag. I closed 'em and she just looked up at me. So on our way back out to the parking lot, we're going to the car and next to the car was a Hummer. And as we were walking up to the car, Rachel stopped and she just started weeping. And I was going, "Are you okay?"

She goes, "Oh, no, no, no! Those cars! Those cars, they remind me of the cars, those trucks, the vehicles that they took the children to the camps away in! No, no, no! I can't go over there! No, no, no, no, no, no, no!"

And so I waited on the sidewalk with Rachel as we pulled around and we picked her up. And we went to the house and she prepared the dough. And it was sitting there waiting to rise and Rachel came up to me. She goes, "You're Indian, aren't you?"

I said, "Yes."

"Come, walk with me. Let's go walk through the garden!" And so she grabbed me by the arm and we started strolling through the garden. And she says, "Now, tell me! Tell me about your people."

And so I told her, I told her, "In 1835 was the Indian Removal Act and my Cherokee people were forced from their homes to walk on a trail 800 miles during winter. Women, children, elders! Many of 'em died! Many of 'em died! And they were put onto a land that was foreign to them. And throughout the Indian country, this was what was going on. They were taking the native people from their lands, the Indian people from their lands. And sometimes they put 'em in cargo holds on trains and taking 'em to other places. Many souls were lost."

And Rachel, she just looked up and she goes, "Huhh! Your people, my people – same! Same!"

As we were walking through the garden, Rachel spotted this beautiful red tomato. And she goes, "Now get that tomato for me!" And I got that tomato and she goes, "Ah, now we need something to cut it!"

I said, "Oh, look at...! I'm going to take this tomato up to the house and I'm going to show it to one..."

And she goes, "No! This is just for you and me! You see, sometimes you have to keep something for yourself!" And so I sat there, and Rachel and I, we ate this red tomato... together... just me and her. That was the best tomato I have ever eaten in my life! She told me, she goes, "You know, me... my revenge... my revenge for what happened to my people, my family is I'm going to live a happy life! That... that cannot be taken away from me! Huh!"

So couple days later I was in Washington D.C. and I went to, to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. And, and as I walked through the Holocaust Memorial Museum, I just walked through and I saw the images, the pictures, the cargo holds. But what really got me was the piles of clothes, the piles of eyeglasses and the piles of shoes, especially the children's shoes!

And when I walked out of that museum, I stood on the sidewalk and I started to cry; I just started to weep. And there was an old black woman who stopped and she handed me a handkerchief and she grabbed my head! She just held me as I wept on the sidewalk!

I took that handkerchief, wiped off my face and when I opened my eyes and looked around, she was gone! I looked down the street, both ways. I looked behind me; she wasn't in the museum! And I looked around. That's when I know that we have angels around us all the time!