

# Twin Experimentation: The Untold Story of The Holocaust

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# Holocaust Twin Experiments?

The Twin Experiments were conducted by the Nazis between January 1933 and May 1945. In addition, victims have been sharing their own traumatic involvement from being imprisoned in **barracks**<sup>1</sup>, being victims of Josef Mengele or other doctors who would stitch pairs of twins together to result in conjoined experimentation, or essentially eye-color changing experimentation. Doctors were even guilty of slimming down children to skeletal figures because they were **malnourished**<sup>2</sup>. This happened because the kids of the Holocaust were given little to no food for their entire week's rations. Some young kids were even injected with mystery substances that would later that day kill them so that Nazis could do **autopsies**<sup>3</sup> of the dead children. A part of the Conflict and Compromise that mattered the most was who doctor Mengele was and why did he enjoy all of these horrible things? What was his motive? What caused his fascination? Is there any evidence of good things that might have come from Mengele's twisted experimentation for the better? Some of the **compromise**<sup>4</sup> of this happening?

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<sup>1</sup> A building or group of buildings for lodging soldiers

<sup>2</sup> Lack of proper nutrition, caused by not having enough to eat, not eating the right things, or being unable to use the food that one does eat

<sup>3</sup> An examination to discover the cause of death or the extent of disease

<sup>4</sup> A settlement of differences by mutual concessions; an agreement reached by adjustment of conflicting or opposing claims, principles, etc.

Compromise is of lesser value. There was some compromise, but it was either unimportant or had little medical need, meaning that it wasn't extremely necessary for doctors to use. Twin Experimentation during the Holocaust involved conflict since most of the inhumane treatment was either unbelievable or unnecessary. The research was only relevant to treatments that were made soon after the Holocaust.

## The Angel of Death

Doctor Josef Mengele, known as the “Angel of Death,” was the cruelest Nazi doctor during the Holocaust. He put all of his experimentees through what has been commonly recognized as a living hell. Mengele was given roughly 1500 pairs of imprisoned twins. He would address a roll call and would feed children an insufficient breakfast. He would then proceed to talk to them, and play games with them. Some kids didn't even realize that they were being tricked and would call him things like “Papa,” or “Uncle Mengele.” Although, they were treated like “privileged prisoners” in this way, it surely got worse. They all thought that their lives weren't so bad in the barracks until they had to become a part of the experiments. He would use each pair of twins as lab rats just about every day for up to eight hours a day, poking and prodding twins. Eva Kor, a twin experiment survivor even said, “They would measure every part of my body, compare it to my twin sister, and then compare it to charts.” (Eva Mozes Kor, 2017). Other than conjoined autopsies of experimentation, Nazi doctors put patients through injections with large doses of infectious diseases

including **typhus**<sup>5</sup>, **smallpox**<sup>6</sup> and **yellow fever**<sup>7</sup>; once being injected, doctors would record how their body responded to it. Mengele would experiment on twins as young as five or six years old. He or other doctors would inject kids with lethal content, and would perform an undocumented autopsy on the corpse. He would try multiple things to see if he would become successful. Mengele would do **transfusions**<sup>8</sup> of blood between a pair of twins, stimulant reactions, inject lethal germs, complete sex change operations, or he would try and manipulate the body by removing organs and limbs to see if the body could handle it. Mengele's obsession of twins led to him experimenting on children to show similarities and differences in the genetics of twins. He also was curious to see if the human body was able to be unnaturally manipulated. In 1935; Josef Mengele earned his PhD in Physical Anthropology. Before becoming a Nazi physician, he was an assistant to Dr. Otmar, a researcher known for his research on twins in Frankfurt at the Institute for **Heredity**<sup>9</sup>, Biology and Racial Hygiene, where he worked until 1943. Upon working for the Nazi regime, he was promoted to **Schutzstaffel**<sup>10</sup> (S.S) Captain. Mengele transferred from multiple camps throughout the Holocaust, one of which was camp **Gross-Rosen**<sup>11</sup>. Mengele brought over a box of experiment records and another box,

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<sup>5</sup> An infectious disease a cause of high mortality during wars and famines.

<sup>6</sup> A contagious viral disease, with fever and pustules usually leaving permanent scars.

<sup>7</sup> A viral disease affecting the kidneys, and causing fever and jaundice and often fatal.

<sup>8</sup> An act of transferring donated blood, blood products, or other fluid into the circulatory system of a person.

<sup>9</sup> The passing on of physical or mental characteristics genetically from one generation to another.

<sup>10</sup> Protection squadron to the Nazi party during World War II.

<sup>11</sup> A German Network camp built and maintained during World War II.

containing various specimens. Unfortunately, all were burned by the S.S for sake of someone finding medical experiments of unspeakable horror.

## Arrival of the Cattle Car Prisoners

When prisoners were rounded up out of the ghettos where they were forced to live in, they were packed into cattle cars, until they got to their designated camp. It was common for many passengers to die before even getting to their camp. Upon arrival, Mengele had told the S.S officers who helped unload transports to keep an “eye out” for twins, dwarfs, giants, or anyone who had a rare hereditary trait such as **heterochromia**<sup>12</sup> or **club foot**<sup>13</sup>. Mengele would stand on the ramp as transports were unloaded and paraded past him. He would make an instantaneous decision on whether or not they were going to the left or to the right of him. To the left, was where roughly ten percent of incomers (mostly men and teenage boys) would be sent to work. The other ninety percent, who happened to be women, children, and those who were too weak to do anything were sent to the gas chambers mainly because they were not needed for much else other than experimentation where the prisoners were sent was up to Mengele to decide. For whatever reason Mengele was fascinated with twins. He believed that twins held mysteries. Mengele worked with genetic engineering to **eradicate**<sup>14</sup> **inferior**<sup>15</sup> genes from the human population, but his ultimate goal was to find a way to enlarge the birthrate of a German

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<sup>12</sup> When a person has eyes of different colors.

<sup>13</sup> A birth defect in which the foot is twisted out of shape or position.

<sup>14</sup> Destroy completely; to put an end to.

<sup>15</sup> Lower in rank, status, or quality.

super-human race. Mengele's obsession with twins led him to even putting chemicals into their eyes to change their color. He was someone that stitched together twins to make them conjoined or "Siamese twins." The even bigger Conflict is why did he enjoy pain in other people?

## Forgivance

One of the pretty well known Holocaust survivors is Eva Mozes Kor. She and her twin Miriam put up with Mengele. In May 1944, Eva, along with her parents, two older sisters, and her twin Miriam, arrived at Auschwitz by cattle car. When unloaded from their car, the whole family had been so confused because no one knew where they had arrived to. Kor arrived at Auschwitz and said "I actually turned around in trying to figure out, what is this place? Never seen a place like that before." (Eva Mozes Kor, 2017) Before she knew it, she no longer had a father or had her older sisters. They were just gone. Eva had not known at the time, but that was the last time she will ever see them again. The twins were found by one of the Nazis who stood on a selection platform and called for another Nazi to come and see. Her mother was quite confused as to what was about to happen, but she positively didn't think that she was going to be taken away to die and leave her daughters all alone in Auschwitz.

The two were used in two types of experimentation every day, but alternating between the two each day. They would organize sets of twins by gender and age and were all kept in barracks when they were not in experiments. The first type of

experiments Eva and Miriam were used for was where they would measure ones whole body and compare it to the twin. On opposite days, the Nazis would take each twin to blood labs. They would restrict the blood flow in each arm, and take lots of blood out of one arm. They would proceed to give kids at least five injections in the other arm. While being injected, they were unaware of the content of each injection then, and are still currently unaware because it was never documented. Eva had become deathly ill from an injection and one day, Mengele came into the room to exam her. "Laughing sarcastically, he said, Too bad. she's so young. She has only two weeks to live," she recalls. "I knew he was right. But I refused to die. So I made a silent pledge that I will prove Dr. Mengele wrong. I will survive, and I will be reunited with my twin sister Miriam." (Eva Kor) Eva and Miriam were unlike most other twins of Auschwitz because they did not die after being treated like human guinea pigs. In those two weeks that Eva was planned to die, Miriam must have experienced extreme trauma because when Eva became healthy again, she asked Miriam what she missed and Miriam refused to talk about those two weeks until 1985. During that year, Eva asked her about what had happened. She told her "I was under Nazi doctor supervision 24 hours a day... She was taken back to the labs, injected with many injections that made her feel very sick." After the two grew up and Miriam got married and expected her first child, she developed severe kidney infections. A few years later, a doctor discovered that her kidneys never grew bigger than the size of a ten-year-old child. In 1987, her kidneys failed, They started to deteriorate, and Miriam died in 1993.

After Miriam's death, Eva got up her courage and decided that she was going to forgive Mengele for the torture, loss of her family, and every bit of pain he caused her and other twins. She said, "I knew that most of the survivors denounced me, and the denounce me today also. But what is my forgiveness? I like it. It is an act of self-healing, self-liberation, self-empowerment. All victims are hurt, feel hopeless, feel helpless, feel powerless. I want everyone to remember that we cannot change what happened. That is the tragic part. But we can change how we relate to it." (Eva Kor) She had done this because she felt that her problem was with one Nazi doctor who had done less damage mentally to her, but that was never who her problem was with. It was with Mengele. Although; other survivors and people who hear Eva's story are astonished that she did this. They don't understand that this was a self-healing process and this was the first part of it. With being a prisoner to Auschwitz for fifty years, Kor believes its best for herself to keep a new clean slate and positive relationship with the Angel of Death. "I was free of Auschwitz, and I was free of Mengele." (Eva Kor, 2017)

## **Life in Barracks**

Being imprisoned in Barracks was a constant struggle on multiple encounters. For one, prisoners were given a small loaf of bread, and a bowl of some sort of "watery soup" that contained potatoes, and rutabaga as its main ingredients. Being a twin during this time, when not being experimented on, living in barracks was a luxury. Barracks were once stables so the walls were extremely thin and had holes in

between the bottom and top, so it was bitter cold in the winter time. Barracks were made out of either brick or wood exterior. Inside, sleeping arrangements were very unorganized because the Germans intended on barracks to house around seven hundred prisoners, but more often than not, there were close to twelve hundred in each one. There were three tiered beds and each one slept three or four people with only thin blankets or rags to sleep with. Twins were grouped together in one housing so that Mengele could round up everyone without going through the hassle of finding each pair every day. They were also grouped by the strong and the workers, the weak, the sickly, who were actually most prisoners who started to have organ **deterioration**<sup>16</sup> that led to the "Muzulman" state, Which was extreme and or physical exhaustion that ended in death. And all of the other types of experimentations that were in store for prisoners.

## Advancement

Through much conflict during this time, the big question is "Was there any compromise?" According to Brian Palmer, an author at slate.com, "Leaving aside the question of medical ethics, did any useful science ever come out of Nazi experiments on unwilling subjects? Very little; The majority of those experiments were either useless, scientifically unsound, or **duplicative**." (Slate.com, 2010)Nazi doctors would create a wound on a patient, cause **gangrene**<sup>17</sup>, and attempt to treat the infection.

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<sup>16</sup> The process of becoming progressively worse.

<sup>17</sup> Localized death and decomposition of body tissue, resulting from either obstructed circulation or bacterial infection.

They did this to twins as well as other prisoners. Although experiments on twins were predominantly unnecessary, some good came out of them. According to Richard Stockton in “Did Nazi Research Actually Contribute Anything To Medical Science?”, he states “Since both twins have identical genes, studying differences in their outcomes helps isolate genetic and environmental influences on disease. Perfectly ethical twin research (obviously not the kind conducted by Mengele) has identified genes for cancer, addiction disorders, and inclinations toward homosexuality.” (Richard Stockton, 2017) To summarize, doctors can now use that type of information to predict if there are mutations in one’s genes, and if there is a history of a certain condition in one’s ancestry. The positives were things like medical advances. For example, they found out that the body can be manipulated for fear of a tumor or birth defect that could be life-threatening. Most of the positive outcomes were not needed because they were made soon after the Holocaust ended. Some people wonder did anything good come out of the Holocaust? Although very little did, some people still question it. But, that’s just the problem. It depends on what side of the story you are on. Some might even say that the holocaust didn’t happen, no matter how much evidence there is to prove that it happened. They might assume that the people who share their own stories are lying, but then that would mean them and the 199 other sets of twins who had survived are lying. So then, is it still likely that their lying? Probably not.

## **Liberation**

Even though not all prisoners of the Holocaust were set free, those who are current survivors of close to seventy-three years, still face some health issues caused by experimentation such as kidney failure due to the content of injections. The genocide will never be forgotten. Twins were Mengele's specialty of Auschwitz and in the end, his research had much Conflict and Compromise because of what he allowed to be conducted to children

## Annotated Bibliography

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- Picture from front cover
  - "I Survived the Holocaust Twin Experiments." *I Survived the Holocaust Twin Experiments*, BuzzFeed, 15 Sept. 2017, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdgPAetNY5U](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdgPAetNY5U) . This video included the picture from the first page. The picture is from the time clip (0:07) of Eva and Miriam Kor when they were about a year old.
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