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## **Genetic mutations, Shoah affect coming generations**

Posted on 26 December 2016.

Aftermath by Allison Nazarian, Allie Girl Publishing, 2016, ISBN 978-0-9828922-2-0, pgs. \$9.99 Kindle, \$14.99 paperback.

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**By Eva Trieiger**



Eva Trieiger

SOLANA BEACH, California — In general most of us shy away from ultimatums or at least prefer not to be tested by a “now or never” choice. This was how Allison Nazarian explained her decision to write and publish *Aftermath*. When a 2G woman, that is, a second generation born after the Holocaust, found her on Google while seeking participants for a panel discussion, Nazarian came to terms with the reality that her story, and her predecessors’ stories, must be told.

In a riveting and revealing phone interview, I had the opportunity to discuss this autobiographical memoir with an articulate, sensitive and supremely authentic young woman. The work itself is intensely personal and I did not want to appear insensitive with my probing. Nazarian chartered a path of transparency, thoughtful consideration, and a true desire to answer all of my queries.

As she spoke, I recognized so much of the content. It was as though we had crossed paths before because our life experiences had so many parallels. Yet, Nazarian had done her homework, where I had not explored my ancestors’ trials and trails. She explained that most of her life, if not all of her childhood, was informed by the Holocaust. Her Bubby, a strong, tour de force, was an immense role model for her, and often an adversary for Nazarian’s mother. Being the daughter of such a dynamo must have been alternatively intimidating, unsettling and overwhelming. As Nazarian described her mother’s remoteness and affect, a clearer picture emerges. As a 2G, much of Allison’s mother’s life was about survival, with sparse room for playful musings and frivolous chatter.

This withholding of affection and connection often left the young Allison feeling insecure and alone, and caused her to become self-critical and hyper vigilant. She told me she believed (wrongly, she now knows) that she had to excel in every way in order to win love and approval from her mother and grandparents. Being good enough simply wasn’t an option. When a younger sister arrived, Allison felt that she must have been inadequate, or insufficient to warrant her parents’ decision to have another child. Nazarian’s mother displayed melancholy or insecurity, not so surprising, considering she was born in a displaced person’s camp, formerly Bergen-Belsen death camp, and seldom enjoyed the doting attentions of her own parents. At the age of 51, Allison’s mother took her own life, and left Allison to sort things out for herself. The author noted that Lily, her mom, felt largely isolated, and therefore may have felt she had no other option.

After becoming a mother herself, Allison gained insight into some of her mother’s struggles, and she forgave her her shortcomings, realizing that her mother had done the best she could with what she had. *Aftermath* proves that the Holocaust was not just something that happened in Europe between the years of 1933-1945, far away, to some scant six million. The event created a legacy, a sociolect that impacted the generations to follow, not dissimilar to a mutation in a DNA strand and the subsequent and permanent alterations it causes in an organism and its offspring.

I wanted to know if learning her Bubby’s story made Allison more alert to anti-Semitism, and she responded that having grown up among survivors, she “couldn’t not be on the alert.” Though she does not want to overwhelm her own children, Allison reports that she will not forget the proof: the tattooed number on her Zeidy’s arm from her grandfather’s time at Dachau. “I know what I saw.” As the generations of survivors dwindles, Nazarian feels she has no choice. She has become a voice for this group who has suffered such degradation and persecution. She does not look forward to the day when she meets a Holocaust denier, but with the publication of *Aftermath*, it is a possibility.

In the early 90s, the author, her mother, and Bubby returned to Poland and visited various sites in Eastern Europe. The most notable and somewhat surprising realization was the normal life that Bubby had led prior to WWII. Bubby pointed out where she and her friends played in the yard, which apartment they’d occupied, and where she’d attended school. Each of these resounded with normalcy and bespoke a life without fear, privation or indignities. This essence of simpatico made an impression on Nazarian who obviously had only known her Bubby post-liberation. All of those stories and connections led directly back to the Holocaust, the camps, and the atrocities that defined so much of her Bubby’s current persona.

Eager to know if Nazarian owned any object that was essential to her Bubby, she described a memento that sounds something like a paperweight. A glass square jar which contains a rock on a bed of felt. There is a note on top of the lid that reads, “Fraction of the Monument where I was incarcerated.” This is from Bremen, Germany, not far from a camp in which she spent time. Other objects keep Bubby’s memory alive for Nazarian, but this is one she sees daily.

Will she follow this work up with an exploration into her Zeidy’s life? Nazarian averred that she may as she is aware of his living family members. Her less vocal grandfather was overshadowed by his wife, and passed away some sixteen years prior to Bubby’s death.

The author made a point of letting me know that her story is just that: her story. She was compelled to open herself up and share her experience, but she does not want to speak for any other family members. Allison Nazarian provided an honest, first person account of what it means to be a 3G, third generation person, following the Holocaust. Her intention is simple. She exhorts others to tell their story and get it out there.

Her next steps are to connect with others who have their own stories. Nazarian realizes that everyone, has a life experience that will enrich the lives of those who learn about it. Whether the person bearing the tale has survived a Holocaust, a genocide, or any upheaval that is universal in the human experience, the author urges people to share and respond to whatever it is that resonates within them.

Nazarian welcomes the opportunity to share her own story and is available to speak to educational institutions and community groups. She may be contacted via [The3GBook.com](http://The3GBook.com) contact page.

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December 27, 2016 at 10:01 am

Even though I've read this book, you brought to light some of the ideas I was feeling but unable to put to words. Great piece.

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