

## "A Man of Courage"

Imagine, living your life in fear and confusion. Making rational decisions that deal with people's lives, health and families. Living your entire life behind a wall of secrecy to save somebody you don't even know. Dedicating your precious time to serve and help a greater cause, something bigger than your self. Imagine. Following your heart, because you knew it was the right thing to do. Creating fake identities and passports to save the Jews of the country Hungary. Carrying the responsibility of the saving of thousands of innocent lives. This was the life of Swedish born rescuer Raoul Wallenberg. Most noted for the number of Jews he saved, Wallenberg was the savior to many but was still known to be humble.

Born in 1912 to a well respected family in Sweden, Wallenberg was surrounded by successful bankers and at a young age was exposed to a life of opportunity and freedom. His father passed away three months before his birth and his mother remarried six years later to Fredrick von Dardel. His mother had two children for Dardel (works cited). For college, Wallenberg attended the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor and majored in architecture and trade. During this time, Wallenberg was supported financially by his paternal grandfather, Gustav Wallenberg. His grandfather pushed for Raoul to experience

diversity in Africa, Palestine (present day Israel), and France. He also wanted his grandson to become part of the family tradition and join the banking world.

Wallenberg didn't want to disappoint his family but was led in a different direction toward the middle of 1944; the U.S. created The War Refugee Board, an organization whose sole purpose was to protect the Jews from Nazis. After being carefully selected for his quick thinking and popular family name; Wallenberg became a part of something that changed many people's lives.

Becoming part of The War Refugee Board was an honor for Wallenberg and he did his job the best way he knew how. His first order of business was to gain complete control of his position so that he had no one to answer to. When he arrived to Budapest, Hungary, there were only 230,000 Jews left out of 400,000 in the country. Wallenberg used "unconventional methods" such as extortion and bribes to gain success with the Germans (works cited). He noticed that little details, such as the color of the paper and symbols were key to gain the attention of the Germans. Creating passes and refugee homes for the Jews were little things that saved thousands of people. Wallenberg also befriended the right people with connections and was able to gain their unreserved respect. He was so passionate about his work that he would literally run along a moving train and throw passes or passports to the Jews. The SS sort of admired this man for his courage and bravery; they shot and missed him on purpose. It makes you

wonder why Raoul Wallenberg risked his own life for the sake of others. He showed a great amount of bravery, strength, moral courage, and intelligence through his acts. In the end, it was estimated that he saved over 100,000 Jew refugees.

Being at that point in my life where every decision I make affects my future. I have to pick the right friends, decide where I want to attend college, and ultimately leave my childhood behind. To me, moral courage means fighting for what you believe in to the extent where it becomes a part of you, whether it has to do with your religion, heritage, family, friends, or traditions. I personally can't think of a specific situation where I showed altruism; but I know in the future I will have to. My heritage and ethnic background is Native American. The definition of "genocide" describes the horrific things that have happened to my people and our ancestry. Living on the border between being a "traditional" Indian and being a more "modern" native has been confusing and difficult at times. With typical stereotypes of Native Americans, being loud, drunk, or unintelligent just makes it that much harder to succeed in whatever I do. Moral courage for me in this situation is to stand with my beliefs in the traditional ways against that of the modern way of thinking. It would be taking a stand in front of my friends and peers to defy the idea people have of Native Americans. It would definitely be a fight worth taking. The time will come when I have to demonstrate my moral

courage and where I will actually stand against others on my own will.

Reading about Raoul Wallenberg and his sincere and intelligent way of thinking has led me to wonder what I could do. He seemed like an ordinary man who defied the norm and fought for what he knew was right. Wallenberg has impacted the lives of millions and is a world recognized hero of the Holocaust. He is an excellent example of what it means to have moral courage.

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