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# Unforgettable

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## Unforgettable

*Emily Rebecca Rosenstein*

CLACK-E-TY CLACK, CLACK-E-TY CLACK. My palms are sweating. My heart is beating very quickly, almost to the same rhythm as the CLACK-E-TY CLACK of the roller-coaster tram making its way to its zenith. I grasp the silver bar rail that tightly holds me in my seat. I look at my surroundings as the tram pulls my body up to an almost vertical position. CLACK-E-TY CLACK, CLACK-E-TY CLACK. There is no turning back and no way to escape. My body feels constrained and my mind fears the uncertainty that lies before me. I feel a sense of closeness to the others seated on this coaster because they are taking the same risk as I. As I ponder this image and its juxtaposition to my recent journey on the March of the Living, I am struck by the similarity between a roller-coaster ride and this experience.

With a camera in one hand and a tissue in the other, I was prepared to walk into the darkness of the gas chamber. I was numb to the air temperature and was neither hot nor cold, yet I was sweating with chills as I moved toward the chamber. My body did not know how to react, just as my mind did not know what to think. Fear, uneasiness, and insecurity haunted my being, and a sort of stiffness began to grow in my body with each step. Once I reached the opening, I walked inside and felt the congestion from the other teens and adults who stood around me. I saw the blue stains from the Zyklon-B gas and the pipes from which that toxic vapor had escaped. Suddenly, I felt a shortness of breath and consequently a need to breathe more heavily. These sights made standing inside the gas chamber so real and even more intense. They almost caused me to regret entering that horrific place, but I realized that there was no way to escape since I was already strapped in for the "ride." As I began to cry, I gasped for breath, but knowing it would not be my last created an amazing feeling of life in this place that was linked so closely with death. I now know that this great sense of life resulted from my ability to walk out of the gas chamber; I had challenged myself and succeeded. My body warmed to the comforting grasp of my companion's hand, whose fingers intertwined with mine as we shared that moment of accomplishment and pride.

I could no longer hear the CLACK-E-TY CLACK of the roller-coaster tram. My ride had come to its end. My anxiety and concern at the beginning were tied to feelings of the past. I was completely exhilarated and anxious to tell my story about the ups and downs of the ride to those who had not shared in the experience. I felt this same eagerness when I returned home from the March of the Living.

When I stepped off the plane, I made a commitment to myself that I would share the stories that I had heard firsthand, spread my knowledge about the Holocaust, and encourage devotion to Judaism. By embarking on that journey, I gained a greater appreciation for life and a stronger set of values that are molding the present me. Physically, the March of the Living has come to its end, just like a thrilling roller-coaster ride. But my experience on the March of the Living has triggered a mental and emotional roller-coaster that will last a lifetime.