My name is Brody Appotive, and I was a March of the Living participant with David Shentow in 2008.

There are no words.

There are no words to describe the horror that David Shentow had to endure in the Holocaust. And there are similarly no words that I can use to describe the type of man he became afterwards.

That being said, I would like to share with you 3 thoughts on how much David has meant to the March of the Living.

1) Who David Was 2) What David Taught Us and 3) Why he was so Special.

So first, who David was.

One would think that, as participants on the March, we would be able to provide David with some sense of comfort or reassurance while we were there. But it was quite frankly, the other way around.

It was David's shoulder that we were leaning on for support, and it was David walking first under the Arbeit Macht Frei sign.

At every single moment, it was David who was putting us at ease. He would laugh with us, cry with us, sing with us, and even complain with us when we got our boxed cold deli lunch for the 6th day in a row. David created such a connection with all of us.

That is who he was.

The Second Thought is what David Taught Us

I wrote about David in my entrance application for law school four years ago. Having just finished law school and writing my Bar exam yesterday, I looked back on my application letter and would like to share a few paragraphs of it with you.

*“You are all now my witness. This is now your responsibility.”*

These powerful words have stuck with me. They have advised me. They have educated me.

They are not my own but rather belong to my hero, David Shentow, a Holocaust survivor. It was in Auschwitz, sitting on the steps of David’s barrack, where he concluded his testimony with these powerful words.

And now, here tonight, almost 10 years later from when I wrote this letter, our obligation continues. Looking back, David taught us the importance of being a witness. By witnessing what we did, we implicitly assumed an obligation. While perhaps we couldn’t singlehandedly curb the denial of the Holocaust, we acquired a greater responsibility both to David and to ourselves to promote tolerance, respect and societal equality. He didn’t ask us to be hateful, spiteful or revengeful. Rather, simply, just to be his witness - to uphold our responsibility, to be kind and to do good.

In 2008, on the March, we were witness to history.

Today, we are now witness to David’s history.

And we will not lose sight of this obligation.

That is what David taught us to do.

Which brings me to the third thought of why David was so special

One can only imagine the courage it must take for a survivor to make the decision to return to Poland. David made this decision on four separate occasions for the March

While he was there, he didn’t tell us his story - he shared his story.

His gentleness and vulnerability allowed for his story to touch us in a way that it remains in our hearts to this day.

Born in Warsaw, April 29th. The family moved to Antwerp. Once the war started, David was taken to a French labour camp. Subsequently, Auschwitz, prisoner 72585. The story of trading cigarettes for bread. There was the warsaw ghetto clean-up with the man in the sewer named Katznelebogen. There were the death marches to Kutno, and another cattle train to Dachau. There was the story of the Mayor of Landsberg and the day of his liberation, at last, April 29th

It’s funny that the March of the Living was 9 years ago, but I still recall listening to David sharing these stories with us in Auschwitz. I remember where I was sitting, where Rose was sitting, where my friends were, and can perfectly remember the timeline of events and names of characters involved.

And as I alluded to, while it is true that there are no words to rightfully capture the essence of David Shentow…

David’s words will live on forever.

We are his witness.