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My parents emigrated to Australia from a displaced persons' camp in Italy in 1949, where they had met and married. One of my father's surviving cousins helped sponsor them to this country because Jews were not permitted otherwise.

Both parents were Holocaust survivors; Mum was born in Poland in 1922 and taken to forced labour/death camps (Grossrosen and Parschnitz) in the Sudetenland (Bohemia). Mum was liberated at the end of the war by the Russians.

Dad was born in Slovakia in 1914. His father Moritz Weiss, moved to Austria in 1920, where he established himself as an accountant in Vienna, and bought a brickyard business in Amstetten.

Due to the rise of Nazism and the annexation (Anschluss) of Austria by Germany in 1938, Dad and his parents and sister were deported from Austria to Bratislava, as they were still Czechoslovakian citizens.

Dad survived the Holocaust by escaping on the illegal steamship "Pentscho", which was wrecked in the Aegean sea. The 500 shipwrecked Slovakian Jews then spent two years on Rhodes. Dad was taken to Ferramonte, (an Italian concentration camp) which he described as a holiday camp. The Italians are noted for their kindness to the refugees. When the Allies won Italy, Dad was liberated and spent the remainder of the war as a driver for the Allied High Commission.

Despite Dad's efforts to return to Slovakia and rescue his family, they were murdered. More than 120 relatives on both sides – my grandparents, aunts, uncles, great-aunts and uncles, and first cousins of my parents - were murdered by the Nazi death machine. My only surviving aunt on my mother's side (born in 1925) lived through Bergen Belsen and settled in Israel after the war.

There are very few Jewish names now in the Slovak phone book. "Weiss" was once a very common Jewish name; Holocaust memorials in Prague and Theresienstadt list this name more than any other. I have visited Auschwitz, Dachau and the sparsely populated synagogues in Berlin, Budapest, Gyor, Hungary, (where my father's mother came from) Prague, Cracow and Warsaw.

I was born in Sydney in the early 1950s. My parents bought a business and worked very hard to give my younger brother and me every opportunity. They often talked about their lives in pre-war Europe and their Holocaust experiences. My work as a government lawyer in Aboriginal land rights exposed me to the Australian Aboriginal population. I am well aware of discrimination and what it can lead to. My experiences as a first generation Australian of non-English speaking background and my parents' lives have led me to join Courage to Care and what it represents.