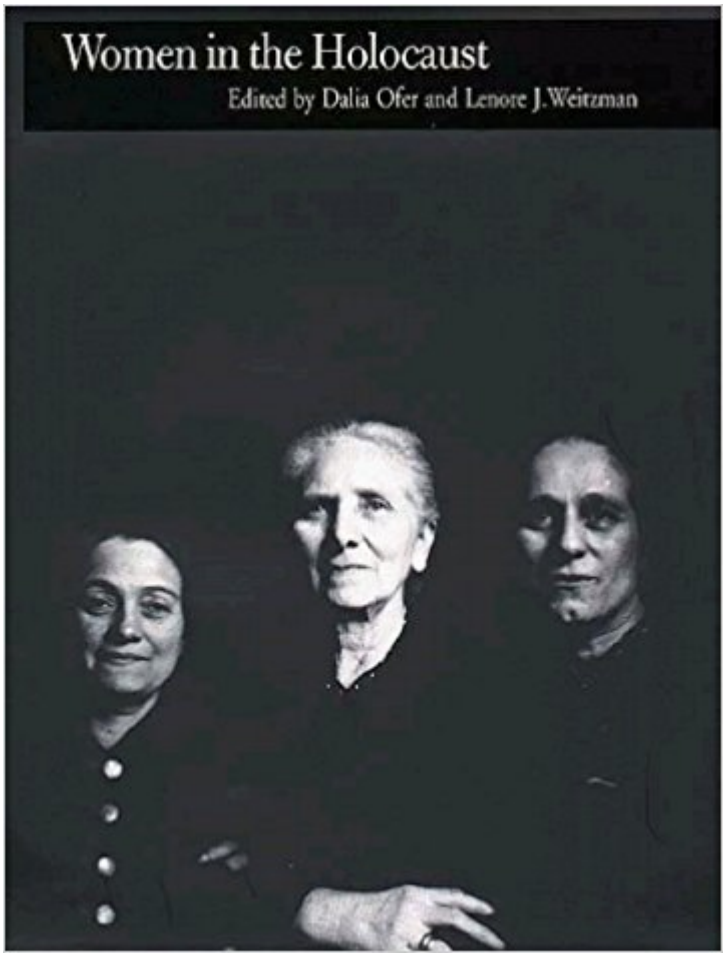
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Women In The Holocaust



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Synopsis

As Jews throughout Europe faced Nazi persecution, Jewish women - wives, daughters, mothers - encountered special problems and had particular vulnerabilities. By examining women’s unique responses, their resourcefulness, their courage and their suffering, the book should enhance our understanding of the experiences of all Jews during the Nazi era. The introductory essay by Lenore Weitzman and Dalia Ofer shows how questions about gender should lead to an understanding of the Holocaust. Testimonies of Holocaust survivors, written especially for this book, shed light on women’s lives in the ghettos, the Jewish resistance movement, and the concentration camps. The narratives personalize and exemplify many of the larger themes explored in other chapters by Holocaust historians, sociologists and literary experts. These chapters explore the variety and complexity of gender differences during the Holocaust. The culturally defined pre-war roles of Jewish men and women endowed them with different spheres of knowledge, expertise and skills with which to face the Nazi onslaught. During the war the Nazis imposed different regulations, work requirements and sanctions on the two sexes. Women had to assume new roles as family protectors during the ghetto period, when men were more vulnerable. On the other hand women, and especially mothers, were more vulnerable in the concentration camps. The detailed portraits of women in these chapters show us their individuality, strength and humanity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ofer and Weitzman, in their introductory essay, posit that their book "shows how questions about gender lead us to a richer and more finely nuanced understanding of the Holocaust." The book is

divided into four parts: before the war, life in the ghettos, resistance and rescue, and labor camps and concentration camps. Liza Chapnik, a Holocaust survivor from Poland, offers a moving account of the early days after the German capture of her hometown of Grodno in July_ 1941. Ida Fink, survivor and prizewinning novelist, captures in a short story the terror of a family's rehearsal for the inevitable knock on the door when the Nazis come to take them away. Another chapter presents interviews of a cross section of women in the Warsaw ghetto, conducted in 1942. One survivor tells of her dangerous work as a courier for the underground youth movement in two Polish ghettos; yet another describes her life in Auschwitz. This remarkable book is a noteworthy addition to the literature of the Holocaust. George Cohen

A valuable collection of 21 articles by leading historians, sociologists, writers, literary scholars, and survivors. Ofer (Contemporary Jewish History/Hebrew Univ., Israel) and Weitzman (Sociology and Law/George Mason Univ.) divide their book into four sections: on life before the war, life in the ghettos, resistance and rescue, and labor and concentration camps. Two contributors express reservations about including women as a subcategory of Holocaust studies at all; they are answered by historian Joan Ringelheim's observation that ``Jewish women carried the burdens of sexual victimization, pregnancy, abortion, childbirth, killing of newborn babies in the camps to save the mothers, care of children, and many decisions about separation from children.'' A fine piece by German historian Gisela Bock on ``Ordinary Women in Nazi Germany'' notes that females in the Third Reich performed almost all the political and administrative roles that their male counterparts did, thus countering Claudia Koontz's hypothesis that they occupied a ``separate sphere.'' Particularly valuable are several memoirs by survivors about daily conditions and coping mechanisms in labor, concentration and death camps. And in a review of three memoirs by Auschwitz survivors, literary scholar Myrna Goldenberg notes how women formed emotional support networks, known as ``camp sisters,'' while men tended to be more isolated. This is not the first collection of its kind, but it does bring together a particularly impressive interdisciplinary group from the US, Europe and Israel. It also reveals how much scholarly work remains to be done. It would be useful, for instance, to have some detailed comparative studies of male versus female behavior and to learn more about topics left uncovered here. Still what is included in Ofer's and Weitzman's collection is substantial and will help readers appreciate how gender sometimes significantly influenced an individual's fate during the Holocaust. -- Copyright Ã Â©1998, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.

This fascinating book about the role/behavior of female victims of the Holocaust is one that I feel is long overdue,as the other reviewer mentioned.This is the only recounting of the Holocaust that deals with female victims/heroes,in particular.Gathering information from records and from survivors must have been terribly difficult to read/listen to,but the author does it well and with great compassion.I have read many other books that related the personal history of individual women who survived,but this book is different,in that it offers a microcosm of what exactly went on in the ghettos,and villages that the genocide encompassed.I read with more than a few lumps in my throat,reading of the courage of the women who tried to keep life as "normal" as they could,despite residing in an earthbound hell.Many thousands of these women perished,but the courage and dignity with which they lived is another testament of just how decent people can be even when they are scared to death.They still reached out to help...up to the last minute before they were taken away,never to be seen again.

An interesting and diverse collection of women’s stories, biographic articles, and historical questions considering the topic of women in the holocaust.

Great writing great subject

Excellent service. As advertised.

At last, and long overdue, this book describes the specific experiences of women during the Holocaust. Most books which deal with the Jewish experience of the Holocaust do not differentiate between the genders, since all Jews were targeted for annilation by the Nazis. . Well-researched and sensitively-written, Women in the Holocaust examines the experiences of women in the ghettos and camps, as seen through the eyes of women survivors. Although this is not a "feminist" treatise, and in no way detracts from the way in which all Jews suffered as Jews during this horrific era in European history, this book provides a better understanding of how women, as women, specifically suffered. Using selected memoirs and other testimonies, the reader is provided thoughtful, poignant, and sometimes highly painful insight into what it was really like for Jewish women as their homes, families, and lives were systematically shattered. Ofer and Weitzman examine the cultural gender roles of Jewish women before and during the Holocaust and provide an understanding of how Nazi policy separated women and children for specific horrors based on these gender roles. While the subject matter may be, and perhaps should be, painful to read, the book is well-written and

compelling. As a student of the Holocaust, I would highly recommend this book for anyone interested in reading about the Holocaust, and would suggest it as required reading for serious Holocaust students.

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