



# Fred Amram — A Legacy that Lives On

Emily Ness

Once in a blue moon, a remarkably rare individual impacts the world, leaving behind an everlasting legacy.

For many Minnesotans — and for many Americans, for that matter — Fred Amram, teacher, preacher, storyteller and Holocaust survivor is this individual.



Images courtesy of Fred Amram

On Nov. 9, 2016, at 7 p.m., Amram will be visiting The University of Minnesota Duluth to share his story.

During this talk, Amram will highlight bits and pieces from his memoir, "We're in America Now: A Survivor's Stories."

Amram addresses audiences of all ages, writing from the perspective of a child, a teenager, a student, an adult, a father and a grandfather.

The story begins in Hannover, Germany, where Amram experienced the Holocaust from its beginning in 1933.

"I had no life before the Holocaust," Amram said.

"Hitler became Chancellor on January 30, 1933 and I was born in September of 1933. So, Hitler and the Nazi party took over Germany just before I was born," he added.

Amram's family felt these repercussions heavily. Amram was born at a Catholic hospital because all the Jewish hospitals had closed.

Due to these circumstances, Amram's mother decided not to have any more children. "Why bring more Jewish children into a world like this?" she asked.

Amram's world narrowed, as Jews were banned from radios, park benches, trolleys and schools.

Amram and his family left the only home that they ever knew, arriving in America in 1939.

Amram recalled that his father's favorite memory was the day that he saw the Statue of Liberty.

"We are in America now," his father said as they passed the acclaimed landmark.

When they stepped off of the boat on a chilly November day, an official was waiting for them.

"What is your name?" asked the official.

"Manfred," said Amram.

"Alright, Fred, is it." repeated the official.

And with that, Fred was an American — even though he didn't entirely feel like one.

"I was an outsider much of the time," Amram recalled. "I didn't speak English, I had an accent, and a different attitude and culture."

To the Amram family's dismay, anti-semitism was present in America as well.

"Although I had escaped from Germany, I was still called a 'Dirty Jew,'" Amram said.

Despite this, Amram was determined to build "a life of Mitzvah" — A life of good deeds, for himself and his family.

"I was a very good student and that was a saving grace," Amram said.

Amram was able to make it through elementary school, junior high, high school and college fairly easily. Eventually, he went to grad school and became a professor of Communication and Creativity at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities.

There, he won the Morse Alumni Distinguished Teaching Award for his exceptional work. Both he and his family were very proud.

Today, Amram tells his children and his grandchildren about the Holocaust in hopes that they, too, will become aware of the genocide that took place.

"I think that everyone needs to be involved. We need to welcome the stranger. We need to reach out," Amram said. "That is one of the reasons that I wrote the book."

As for the future, Amram is hopeful but cautious.

"I am not a predictor. I am optimistic about my life and about my children's and grandchildren's lives. However, I am terrified of what is happening in the world. I see genocide all around me. So, in a sense, I am pessimistic as well," he said.

His work is not done, however. "Tikun Olam" — Repairing the world — is something that he will strive for forever, extending his life's legacy.

After the talk, Amram will be signing copies of his book. All are invited to remember the past and to take responsibility for the future.

## Emily Ness

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