

Growing up in Strasbourg



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The possibility of expressing my Jewish voice is a privilege that my parents and grandparents did not have, and for that I am honoured to be able to do it for them. In a world where anti-Semitism has been at its height since the Second World War, what keeps me going and keeps me fighting is the support, unity and resilience of the Jewish people.



When I was approached to tell my story, my first thought was: my story exists through my family and my loved ones. In order to tell it, I must first tell you a little about my family history.

My mother was born in Lupeni, Romania, and grew up under Ceaușescu's communism until 1991, when she arrived in France.

Her Jewish upbringing, invisible from the outside but present, was passed on to her by her parents and grandparents. The values of Judaism, such as respect for others and tikkun olam, she in turn passed on to us. When she arrived in Strasbourg, she became an active member of the Jewish community, which she also passed on to me.

My father was born in Strasbourg into an Alsatian-Moroccan family from a mixed marriage. He grew up in a Catholic and Jewish environment, where he was able to follow both traditions.

At the age of 13, when he had his bar mitzvah, he chose to follow a more advanced Jewish path.

After they met and I was born, my parents decided to enrol me in a Jewish school for nursery school. I stayed there for a year. After that, I followed an international curriculum at a state school in Alsace. As Alsace is a Concordat state, the possibility of taking a course in the Jewish religion was offered, and from primary school to lycée, I benefited from one hour of religious education a week.

Alongside school, I attended Talmud Torah classes on Wednesday mornings, where I learned to read and write in Hebrew, as well as the traditional festivals. At home, I learned about culture, traditions and the joy of celebrating with family and friends.

My parents didn't think that anti-Semitism could affect me in Strasbourg, a multicultural European city. However, anti-Semitic attacks have affected me since the I entered secondary school.

In German lessons, I decided to present the Diary of Anne Frank. From that day on, I was considered the 'Jew' by most of my classmates, and I witnessed remarks such as 'you dirty Jew' and 'aren't you fed up talking about the Shoah, Natacha?'

Surrounded by four good friends, I always managed to talk about religious diversity and try to reveal part of my identity by answering questions to demystify Judaism.

It was at this point that I became close to Simone, an Auschwitz survivor. Simone played a key role in my personal life and in the beginning of my activism, particularly for the memory of the Shoah.

Thanks to her, I was able to organise testimonies and discussions to raise awareness among secondary school pupils and students of the importance of the duty to remember.

My involvement with the UEJF (Union des Étudiants Juifs de France) really began in June 2022, when I became president of the local section in Strasbourg. From then on, I wanted to organise events bringing together all the students who wanted to discover or learn about Jewish traditions.

By organising shabbatonim, seminars and parties with intercultural mediation, I myself learnt new traditions at each event.

Jewish identity has been an integral part of my daily life since 7 October 2023. Since that indescribable day, my daily life has been marked by anti-Semitic problems (under the guise of anti-Zionism), support for Israel in universities, and raising awareness of the fight for hostages among local and national elected representatives.

This event, which I experienced as a stab wound, made me realise and live even more intensely the phrase 'הזב הז מברע לארשי לכ' which means 'all Israel is responsible for each other'.

This phrase, which is the slogan of the World Jewish Congress (WJC), reminded me that there are as many identities, traditions and beliefs as there are Jews. Thanks to the Lauder Fellowship, I had the opportunity to be part of this programme, which brings together students from all over the world.

This involvement has enabled me, through various media, to make my voice and that of Jewish students heard. Every day, I become aware of the opportunity and the responsibility that this represents.

The possibility of expressing this voice is a privilege that my parents and grandparents did not have, and for that I am honoured to be able to do it for them.

It is on this beauty and unity of the Jewish community that I wish to conclude this article. In a world where anti-Semitism has been at its height since the Second World War, what keeps me going and keeps me fighting is the support, unity and resilience of the Jewish people.

Thanks to WJC, I had the opportunity to create a podcast about the Jews of Romania entitled '[Tree of Life: My Romanian Jewish Roots](#)', which is available on several platforms.

