

Jane and Ros Merkin

Rede 2. Mai

We are here today because on the 21st December 1938, our grandparents Koloman and Franziska Hacker put their 3 daughters, Johanna, Paula and Melanie on to the Kindertransport from Vienna to London. They promised they would come and get them soon. But they never could because on the 1st October 1942, together with their 4 year old son Max ,they were deported from their home on Grosseschiffgasse to Theresienstadt. Two years later, they were sent from there to Auschwitz where Franziska and Max were killed. Koloman was then transferred to Kaufring where he died in January 1945.

We think there are two reasons why it is important that we are here today. In part, it is to remember and to commemorate the lives and deaths of family members we never had the chance to know because they were murdered in the Holocaust. What is particularly pleasing about being here today is that the Stones of Remembrance mean that as hard as the Nazis tried to wipe our grandparents and uncle from the face of the earth, they now form a permanent part of the fabric of this city.

But there is also a wider reason this is important to us as their descendants; we are who we are because of what happened to them and we hope that their deaths have given us some purpose. So - equally important to us is to create a lasting memorial not just to individuals and not even just to all of those who died in the Holocaust. The world today is as frightening for some people

as it must have been for our grandparents in Hitler's Vienna, people whose lives are at risk because of the colour of their skin, because of their religious beliefs or because of their political affiliation.

We wanted to be part of a growing monument that will serve to remind people of what can happen when we let hate and prejudice prevail. We hope that as people going about their daily lives stumble across these plaques, they will serve as a reminder of the history of this city, as an inspiration to fight fascism and prejudice in all their forms and as a reminder to people that evil can only triumph when good people do nothing.