

Dear Mr Braun,

I am a student at Voltaire Senior High School in Wingles, where you came to give a talk about your life story on Friday 19 March.

Firstly, I thank you for having come all this way just to speak to us.

I don't really know how to explain what I feel, but I think you have certainly opened my eyes.

First of all, I don't think I will ever go to Auschwitz because it seems to be a bleak place. The spectre of death is engrained there, imprinted in the stones. Everything I heard about the tragic stories you told of that place made me want to cry. But seeing you laugh and talking about these terrible things with the strength you had to survive, it made me seek such strength in myself. The courage you showed, telling your story to relive it all every time you repeat it. Talking about things that most people would rather forget if it had happened to them. Your courage is commendable.

You are someone who challenges us to open our eyes, to help us to have a more worthwhile future. You are not simply your past, you also live for the future. That is what is so commendable. I really don't know if I would have had the strength and courage that you had. But I am sure that from now on I will try to have the courage you had.

The prejudices that infect people are bad. I was a bit like those people before, being against those who might be different to me, to my race, to my colour.

But for a while now I have questioned such ideas which are too old and out of date for these times.

The reason for my sudden change is the fact that I am going out with a Muslim guy. Islam is a culture I am not familiar with. It is certainly different but interesting. I am sure everyone took the time to listen to and understand people who are different to them they would think about everything they can gain, rather than thinking such people are inferior.

You are right to move on and to not wallow in what happened to you. Pity is such a weak and unworthy way of thinking. It shouldn't exist, but we cannot control our feelings. What you said has actually taught me things, rather than making me pity you.

People are not their own enemies. But I believe it is in the nature of human beings to fight themselves, and what better enemy can we fight but ourselves?

We can change that because we are the future and if we see Nazism as a mistake, we can learn the lessons of history and not repeat the same mistake. We have the

strength and the will to fight ourselves, because as you said, our destiny belongs to us. I challenge anyone who says otherwise.

I don't know if you can understand what I am trying to say and please forgive the confusion, because I am not used to writing about this kind of thing. Usually my thoughts stay in my head. They belong to me and I have trouble sharing them. A bit like you, as it took you 40 years to express what a lot of people kept silent in their hearts. I know that is not the best thing to do.

I hope that this letter will not upset you, but instead it will reassure you of the value and success of your work.

What you told us has enormous impact and it has a lot to do with your strength of character, which no body can, or could ever deny.

I leave you now with my most sincere gratitude.

P.S.: I hope you will not think this is crazy, but I needed to write this letter to you to calm the turmoil in my head I could not control. Being a teenager is often not easy.

Bouin Aurélie
59 185 Provin

You are an amazing man, like your father was too. I am sure he must be really proud of you and all your family.

Just one more thing, you say that Judaism is your culture, not religion. However, the culture has come from the religion so for me the two are entwined. It's the only thing that remains unresolved for me.