



This first collage is representative of the earlier years of Charlotte's life. Charlotte Wollheim was born in Aschaffenburg Germany in 1928. Fear was a fog constantly lingering in her environment growing up. Jewish children were not allowed to attend public schools by the time she was of schooling age, and Jewish boys were cautioned to stay inside when Nazi youth groups marched in the streets. The Nazi party also intended to confiscate the funds from her synagogue, of which Charlotte's father was the treasurer. Instead of handing over the funds, he distributed them to the poorest members of the temple, and was arrested for doing so in 1936. The collage expresses the uncertainty, chaos, and conflict present in Charlotte's early childhood. Dehumanization is portrayed by the image in the bottom right, as well as the cage, representing both jail and more abstract feelings of being trapped.

Charlotte's family was separated when her parents began venturing to Spain to make a new life for their family. She and her sister were sent to a Jewish orphanage that began taking boarding students when public schools closed to Jews. Her parents planned to send for them when they were settled in Spain, but when the Spanish Civil War broke out in 1938, the borders were closed and they were unable to do so. This separation is represented by the broken pieces of the collage, as well as an image on the left-hand side. That image also represents the disruption to the lives of Jews in Germany, and how the world as they knew it essentially collapsed.

A quintessential event of Charlotte's life in Germany was Kristallnacht in November of 1938. Charlotte and her family were asleep in her grandfather's house when the front door was smashed in. Nazis came into the house, throwing the china and glassware in the kitchen onto the floor. Charlotte and her sister climbed out the window at the instruction of their mother. The following morning, her father went to report the event, as he thought it had been a singular break-in. He was arrested, and was only released when he was able to provide papers as proof of his family's plans to leave the country. Kristallnacht is presented through more abstract imagery, in the sharp pieces making up the collage, as well as the images that portray chaos or destruction.

The shards of the collage are off-center, and not aligned with the paper they rest on. This is indicative of the uncertainty and disruption in the lives of Jewish people in Germany at the time. Finally, the girl in the bottom right corner. She looks fearful and innocent, yet her eyes seem to be looking for something. There is a duality of despair and hopefulness in her gaze that is very aligned with Charlotte's story. Charlotte and her family were fortunately able to secure affidavits, and came to America on Christmas of 1938.



The second collage is representative of Charlotte's story once she has moved to America. While there were new opportunities for her family in New York, it certainly took time to adjust. Charlotte didn't understand any English, and ended up placed in a classroom three years below her grade level. She eventually learned English from crossword puzzles (pictured in the collage), which has fueled a "lifelong addiction." In her first year in American schools, the only person who attempted to befriend her was an African American classmate of her's, and Charlotte had never met a Black person before. Discussing this with me, Charlotte said: "To this day I am grateful to her on so many levels. Not only that she had the humanity to befriend me, but the lessons she taught me about the 'other' has lasted me a lifetime." Charlotte's empathy is a strong characteristic of hers, represented by the heart in the collage.

The images of greenery, the flower, and the butterfly in the collage represent growth. Charlotte has continued to learn and grow throughout her life, and is now an advocate for many world issues. In our conversation, she stressed the importance of caring about things that matter, emphasizing climate change (hence the globe in the bottom right). When we asked what she felt was important for people to do or know, Charlotte responded: "Be a voter, be an educated voter. And don't feel that anything you do or don't do is unimportant, because acts add up." A diverse vote is represented in the colorful pie chart on the right-hand side. Charlotte emphasized to us that we are not as isolated as Americans like to believe. The actions of every person are influential, and we need to care and use our voices to make a difference.

Charlotte recognized the importance of telling her story when she moved from New York to Seattle, and there were far less Holocaust survivors in her area. She says she felt "a sense of obligation to those unable to tell the story," and wanted to create awareness of the implications of intolerance. Charlotte remarked in our conversation that seeing youth involved, inquisitive, and invested makes her hopeful about the future. The children on the left side of the collage represent the next generation of learners, who will carry on the valuable messages of Holocaust education. Charlotte reminded us that The Holocaust was "not the first time man's cruelty to man has manifested itself with tremendous consequences, nor, I'm pretty sure, is it the last time," making it incredibly important to be aware and advocate against injustice.

Comparing the two collages, there is a stark contrast between the brokenness of the first and the wholeness of the second. The second collage has a sense of completeness and purpose that is absent in the first one. Charlotte's conviction in the importance of her work is admirable, and has a powerful impact on younger generations.