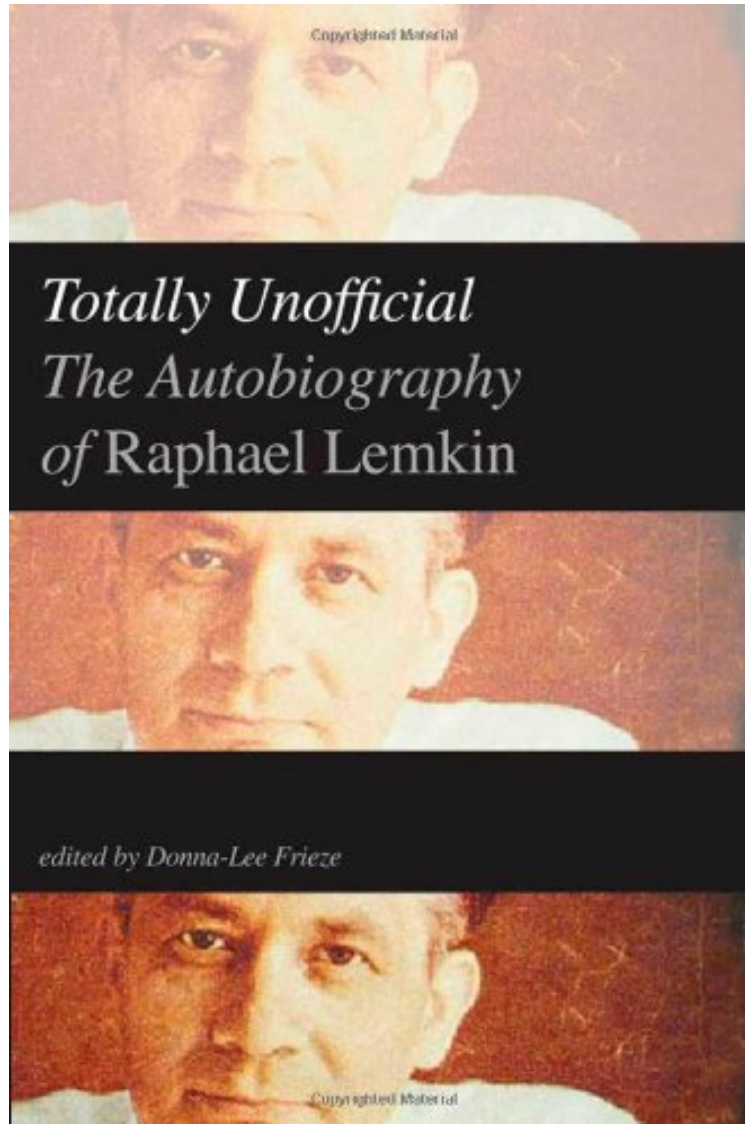


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Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin

Raphael Lemkin

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Raphael Lemkin : Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised *Totally Unofficial: The Autobiography of Raphael Lemkin*:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. early adulthood nor escape in Poland - I'm sure because it was too painful and brought up the 49 family members lost to ...By Peter Raphael Lemkin was a regular visitor to my parent's home when I was growing up. He was my grand-uncle. I remember him well, and my parents and their friends

speaking about him and his work both when he was and wasn't around; equally after he died (all too young). So, I knew well the story of his life and work. After his death all of his papers and books, etc. from his apartment in NYC lay preciously guarded under my train table in the basement of our family home in Hempstead, N.Y. - all except one - his autobiography was held by a rather unconscionable and greedy Mr. Gabriel, who wanted to find a buyer for the autobiography which he had custody of. Though having seen all of his other papers (now in several archives, donated by my father Robert Raymond Lemkin DDS) when they were in our home for 1.5 decades, I had never seen the manuscript of his autobiography. It took all these many years for someone to lovingly learn to read his handwriting; understand his revisions and put it in a logical order and complete a few parts that were only in outline. The book was a treasure for me to read. Raphael never talked about his boyhood, early adulthood, nor escape from Poland - I'm sure because it was too painful, and brought up the 49 family members lost to the Holocaust despite his pleas for others to flee with him. As persons here and elsewhere have noted, he devoted his life to one thing - using law and the power of morality to fight against the dark side of humanity - against crimes against humanity, against wars, and against the term of his coinage: genocide! He was a lonely and poor man who always fought on against great odds and the obstacles of power and entrenched notions of international law and the interests of nations. He could have had a more normal life, but he chose the one he did because he felt he could choose no other - and we are all the richer for that; however, there is still a VERY long way to go to see his dreams ultimately realized. Long an obscure figure, except to the family and the few who knew him, his time now seems to have arrived. Many books and films have been made - others I know of are in production. Courses are taught on Genocide and some universities even have programs dedicated to its study. Personally, he taught me how one person could make a difference in the World, and that one should first consider themselves a citizen of the World, before thinking of unimportant things like 'nationality' or 'clan', 'religion', speaker of this or that language, etc. Too many say 'what can I, one person, do?' I think my uncle Raphael answered that with the way he led his life. I really enjoyed reading this book and it rings true to the man I knew and heard from and about so many times at my family home and from others. I was touched with the sensitivity he portrayed his innocent pre-war years, living in the Pale - as well as the descriptions of his worries, strategies, doubts and hopes to see his dream realized. It even was, partly, by the time he died. Sadly, it was not until many years after his death that the USA finally signed onto the Genocide Treaty of the United Nations (which he wrote and 'unofficially' haunted the U.N. to persuade nations to sign on to it at the U.N. and ratify it in their own homelands. My thanks to the editor who so wonderfully made this unfinished manuscript a reality. I would suggest this book highly to anyone concerned about the issues that Raphael Lemkin devoted his life to, and for anyone who wants to know how one person can make a difference in the World....if only more of us would try. Peter R. Lemkin 10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. The Story of One Man's Mission To Save Humanity from Itself By Na Steinson Ehrlich I met Raphael Lemkin in 1958. I was a student of Public Law Government at Columbia Univ. Dr. Lemkin was an inspiration as a person. He had a mission to protect the cultures and peoples of the world from the heinous crime that befell his family and European Jewry during WWII. This book reveals his courage, his persistence and his positive attitude towards being able to do something important for the world in spite of all his struggles and hardships. He argued that If killing one person is a crime in most societies, what about the crime of murdering a whole people? The United Nations in its infancy was the perfect venue for supporting a Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, a term that he had coined. I thoroughly recommend this book to any one who is interested to know how one person persisted in changing the world through personal persuasion and the application of law. His belief in the law is a much needed reminder that all cultures have developed laws that circumscribe human behavior in order to survive with dignity and order. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. Raphael Lemkin And His Muse By marcia abcarian No one with a broad concern for the human condition could remain unmoved and without deep gratitude for the achievement this book represents. It offers the very touch and smell of the soil in which Raphael Lemkin's central concept germinated and conveys the calculating, insistent, unrelenting personal initiative it took for him to keep it alive. But, beyond all that, I was struck by the irony that, when addressing anything but genocide and the law, Lemkin's writing seemed to take wing, as in his descriptions of childhood, his depictions of nature, suggesting to me that he sacrificed a profound literary creativity in order fulfill the mission he set for himself.

Among the greatest intellectual heroes of modern times, Raphael Lemkin lived an extraordinary life of struggle and hardship, yet altered international law and redefined the world's understanding of group rights. He invented the concept and word genocide and propelled the idea into international legal status. An uncommonly creative pioneer in ethical thought, he twice was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"If the history of the Western moral imagination is the story of an enduring and unending revolt against human cruelty, there are few more consequential figures than Raphael Lemkin and few whose achievements have been more ignored by the general public. . . . Totally Unofficial is at its most alive when he evokes his childhood in the Jewish world of Eastern Europe before World War I. . . . Vivid chapters of Lemkin's autobiography describe the incredible odyssey of

his escape."Michael Ignatieff, New Republic