

## Speech for launch of Halina Rubin's *Journeys with My Mother*

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The first time I heard about Halinka's story and her family's experience during the Second World War back in Europe, was in one of her letters to me in Nauru detention centre in 2001.

Over many years she sent letters to asylum seekers who were held in detention with little hope and in hard conditions. In one of her letters Halinka mentioned that once she was also a refugee, and that she ALSO had to escape persecution. She said she UNDERSTOOD the plight of refugees and was against their detention.

Halinka's COURAGE to write to strangers that she had never met was inspiring, she was NOT carried away with the politics of fear and demonisation. Reading through Halinka's book, I can see what has driven her passion and her profound understanding of the situation for victims of war, institutionalised violence and persecution. People who lose everything because of war, fanaticism and tyranny, including many family members and their loved ones.

Halinka's strength to survive, but also her passion to be active against injustice and oppression have inspired me. I call her my Australian mum, and I haven't let her go in the past 14 years. Perhaps John Howard was correct that she was asking for trouble making friends with an asylum seeker!!! 😊

Ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming the author of "JOURNEYS WITH MY MOTHER" Ms Halina Rubin.