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The girl next to me breathes in and out frantically. Every one is so close together, there is no room to move. I can almost feel the crawling bugs, almost smell the stagnant stench of so many people in such a small space, and I can almost feel the panic of a girl who has lost her entire family. I now see four walls of a cattle car closing in around me and I need to reach for that one corner of light. I need it so badly, I need it or I will go insane. Suddenly the music I was unaware of before has revealed itself to me only because it has stopped. The walls fade away, I can breathe easy, and I realize that I am in the dance studio where I have been the whole time.

The summer of 2008, I participated in a ballet summer program at Academy of Ballet Arts. At the end of the program, I was in a performance that consisted of several dances from various different choreographers. Each dance in the show was a story in itself and they were not related in any way. However, out of all these dances, one of them will forever stay in my memory because of what it portrayed and what it stood for. This dance was entitled, *I Never Saw Another Butterfly*, and it was based on the book by the same name.

That book was a collection of artwork and poetry from several children who passed through Terezin, a concentration camp that was used as a facade to try to hide the tortures of the other concentration camps during the holocaust, and to attempt to satisfy anybody with a conscience. Many children, artists, and other skilled people were sent to this camp. Despite the fact that this was a "model camp", they were still doomed to die from lack of food, sickness, and from transportation to other, more brutal camps. Through the years of 1942 to 1944, 15,000 children under the age of fifteen passed through this camp and less than 100 of these survived. In this dance, we were supposed to

represent these children, and all the children that still believed in the goodness of people and hoped for better things.

In order to effectively portray these children, we had to do a lot of research and learn to the best of our abilities what it was like to go through those impossibly horrendous times. I read many books on the Holocaust its survivors and was greatly impacted by them all. I also made a point of sitting down and watching movies dedicated to this time period. However, some were so horrendously accurate, like Schindlers List (which the music for our dance came from), that I could not continue to watch them. After this research, we were asked to try to decide what we would have done in that situation, and portray that throughout the entire dance. So I did the research and I thought about these things and I realized that these are things that nobody wants to think about. Nobody wants to imagine what might have happened if they were sent to camps with unbearable conditions, where every one was dying and it was so hard to find a will to live. Nobody wants to envision the starving children, hear their terrified screams, look into their tortured eyes. Honestly, I am not sure I would have been able to survive.

These questions haunted me, what would I do? How would I feel? How would I have coped with this? Would I still be able to believe in the goodness of people? I am not sure I would have been able to do any of those things. I am not sure how anybody would be able to believe in good things when all they are surrounded by is death and dying, not just of natural causes, but slow painful deaths inflicted on their loved ones by other human beings. I am not sure I could. I think of people I have read about, like Livia Bitton-Jackson, who was liberated from concentration camps at fourteen, but was believed to be a sixty-two year old woman because of the wear on her face due to the

things she had endured. Yet, she grew up to have a life, with a husband, children and story that she retold despite the pain of doing so. Like Hannelore Wolff, who went through eight different labor and concentration camps but managed to survive and thrive in a life following these events. How did they do it? Would I have been able to do it? These are questions that I, just like most every one else would like to push out of my head and go outside into the beautiful sunshine, get into my nice car, drive to my lovely home and greet my family and loved ones and forget all of those who died mercilessly for no reason at all. So why don't I then?

I don't push these awful things aside and live my happy life for many reasons. I don't just go on pretending it didn't happen because if every one did that, we would forget. We would forget those who died, and we would forget those who survived and are haunted daily by the things they saw. I don't because through my research and findings I realize that I owe it to those people to tell of the wrongs that ended their brilliant lives so early. I don't because I look at this world today and see discrimination and violence practiced against those who are different and history flashes before my eyes. How can we prevent that? I believe that the most important way we can fight against such evils in this world is by studying how evil has ameliorated in the past, and make a conscious effort to prevent them from occurring again.

I don't push these awful thoughts out of my mind because I need to make sure that my children and my children's children never forget the appalling things that took place during the holocaust so that something as atrocious as that will never happen again. I believe that if we don't remember, no one will. In the words of our twenty-eighth

president Woodrow Wilson, I believe that "those who forget history are doomed to repeat it".

### Works Cited

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*Schindlers List* DVD