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The Monster in Us

As innocent and precious young children, our utmost fears lie in the murky and mysterious space underneath our beds or inside our chaotic and cluttered closets. We fear the gigantic, green and gruesome monsters with vicious claws, bright and penetrating yellow eyes, and atrocious fangs that haunt us at night, but what we do not realize as children is that human beings are the true monsters who inhabit almost every nook and corner of planet Earth. We are the monsters that choose to kill our own people for the futile issues that hover among different races or religions. We are the monsters that believe we have the right to separate and create boundaries between mankind based upon color, caste, or creed. We are the monsters that whip the innocent minds and souls of children trapped in the raging and never-ending battle of power, hate, and racial divisions. This monstrous mankind is embodied through the events of the Holocaust, or the human genocide of a harmless race of people, of the gypsies and homosexuals, and of the physically disabled and mentally ill (Grant 57). It would be wrong to gift the title of monster only to Hitler as many others had tiny monsters in them when they stood by him as accomplices, or the others who did nothing to prevent what was happening, or then the others who blindly followed the malicious leader when innocent Jews were used as scapegoats. And even today, there are tiny monsters that exist in all of us if we do not speak out against hatred, promote equality, and simply "remember" the appalling events of the Holocaust.

Holocaust survivor Abel Herzberg stated, "There were not six million Jews murdered; there was one murder, six million times" (The Holocaust). The intensity and tragedy of the Holocaust is not one that can be easily forgotten, or easily remembered without a pain. In history

classes, facts are thrown at students about the Holocaust- it began in 1933 when Hitler came into power and ended in 1945 when the Nazis were defeated by the Allied powers. We learned the statistical value of 11 million murdered victims. We learned that Jews were forced to wear the yellow Star of David on their clothing so that they could easily be recognized. We learned about the poor conditions of the concentration camps in which prisoners slept three or more on a narrow wooden bunk, and we learned about the many abysmal extermination camps (Holocaust Encyclopedia). And yes, we memorized and instilled these facts in our brains for a test or a paper, but this short coverage of such a vast event diminished the true understanding of the effect and impact of the Holocaust on the lives of many men, women, and children. As I start to understand rather than just remember the facts of the Holocaust, I have come to hate the hatred among people, feel the pain felt among the 11 million victims, and attack the monsters in people that could bring about the monstrous acts yet once again.

Some of us might believe that the Holocaust is over, the hatred has diminished, the world has learned to live in harmony, and those different people are now accepted into the world. Even though some people would love to believe that, the hatred and injustice just happens to haunt the world again and again. One of the smallest countries of Central Africa, Rwanda, was a recent subject of human genocide in 1994 as Hutu militia indiscriminately killed 800,000 Tutsis as a result of political tensions. Meanwhile, the conflict of the ethnic groups of the Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in Bosnia-Herzegovina from 1992-1995 led to the genocide of another 200,000 innocent souls, while the genocide in Darfur, Sudan has claimed 400,000 lives and displaced over 2,500,000 people (Genocide in the 20th Century). And then we ask ourselves: Are the monsters in humans not dead yet? Have we not learned our lesson? Why do human beings continue to kill their own kind?

The answers to these complex questions lie within us. Each year, a new group of

students will absorb the same facts that I did, but it is the understanding of these facts that will turn down the evils and hatred that mankind forms against their own. Today, our world is flooded with the fear of terrorism and the onset of raging wars, which is why it has become even more necessary to infuse the notions of harmony and love among all nations, communities, people, and races. Globalization has made the problems of one place, the problems of the other. As Elie Wiesel states, "We have learned that whatever happens to one community ultimately affects every community. Anti-Semitism is the beginning, not the end, of a disease" (Rochman 10). We were all created with two eyes, one nose, one mouth, two arms and two legs. If these simple ideas are instilled in the minds of young generations, the complex monsters that instigate the events similar to the Holocaust will never unleash.

A young German, Michael Hueber states, "German history is my history. I too am guilty in a way. It's important to me to know what happened and make sure it never happens again" (Grant 59). It is this attitude that can prevent the horrors of the Holocaust from ever entering our lives again. Since human beings started the chaos of hatred and racism, developed the boundaries, sketched imaginary lines on the ground, and differentiated between different races and cultures, it is also human beings who could at least try to stop the events of the Holocaust from repeating. It is true that as a fifteen-year-old girl, I could not stop the crimes that are occurring across the ocean. I could probably not even put a complete stop to prejudice happening across the street. However, as the future of the world, we still have the right and the duty to speak up against any form of discrimination, hate crimes, or insults against people. I have the privilege of living in the true melting pot of the world, New York City, where all different religions and cultures can be found in one single classroom. However, not every place in the world treasures these differences. It is up to us, as students, to start small within our communities and raise awareness of our different heritages and beliefs.

The one voice that speaks up against insults or prejudice could lead to one hundred voices and then one thousand voices, and soon even one million voices. We can start clubs at our schools that promote equality and recognize different religions, or we could simply sit next to the person who is always the victim of discrimination. We could lend a helping hand to people with disabilities or we could simply respect others with differences. Every year, on Founder's Day, my high school recites the Ephebic Oath, which states, "I shall not leave my city any less but rather greater and better than I found it," and it is this idea that could make all the difference.

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