

Sarah Eucalano
Milwaukee, WI

Sometimes when I turn on the news, or open up a newspaper or history book, I feel hopeless because I am just one person, still in high school, and I think there is nothing I can do to help the world free itself from the blind hate and prejudice that seems to be a repeating theme. Then I realize that this feeling of hopelessness is one of the factors that allowed the Holocaust to occur and to continue. I cannot give up my independence and judgment and allow others to make my decisions for me or tell me what to think or believe, as I resign myself to a life of hopelessness, obedience, fear, and hate.

The Holocaust needs to be remembered and understood in order to create a future where everyone can be valued and treated as a human. Not only do I need knowledge of events from the past to combat prejudice, but also knowledge of why and how those events happened. All of this together defines history, and an understanding of history and of people will enable us to prevent genocides like the Holocaust from repeating.

A deeper understanding of the world I live in can help prevent the ignorance and fear that leads to hate and prejudice. I, as a student, can prevent this prejudice by not succumbing to fear. The Nazis in Germany, the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia, and every other tyrannical force ruled with fear. Fear leads to hate, and people who are filled with hate become blinded to facts and what is truly going on around them. If I can make my decisions on what to believe based on fact, logic, and thought, and then turn my convictions into actions, I can prevent blind fear and prejudice.

The importance and power of the individual can never be forgotten, especially during times of extreme hate and discrimination, like the Holocaust. Anne Frank was able to put a story and a face to one of the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust through her diary. In doing so she not only told her story, but she also gave a voice to all the people the Nazis

attempted to silence through the Holocaust. Stalin, the main perpetrator of the genocide in Ukraine (The House of Representatives, 2003), made popular the phrase, "One death is a tragedy, a million just statistics" (De Jonge, 329). Anne Frank proves Stalin wrong by showing that eleven million deaths are eleven million tragedies, and that the voice of a people can never be silenced.

Anne Frank inspires me because even though she lived under the daily threat of being mercilessly killed she was able to persevere. She was killed in Auschwitz, but she still lives on in many people's hearts as a source of personal strength and as a symbol of courage. Not only do we need to learn about the people who were put through terrors like the Holocaust, and overcame and dealt with the circumstances they were given, we need to pass on their stories to help future generations understand that every one of the eleven million people killed in the Holocaust had a life, a story, and a dream that was ended by the ignorance and intolerance that made the Holocaust possible.

Anne Frank and the people like her are the challengers and destroyers of prejudice, bigotry, and sadism. They do not surrender to blind fear of the tyranny they are under, or to hate of the people being targeted. Daoud Hari is from Darfur, and his village was destroyed by people who hated him and his people only because they were not the same. Instead of filling himself with hate and fear he used his knowledge of languages to tell the news organizations that came to his country what was happening. Hari did not fight his oppressors by using their methods of brutality and rage. Like Anne Frank, he fought with something much stronger, with words that created mutual understanding and allowed knowledge and experience to be passed on.

Respect, tolerance, and knowledge are needed between people and generations of people in order to create mutual understanding between individuals and prevent genocide from

reoccurring. Efforts to create mutual understanding are evidenced in the graphic novel *Maus*, a story of a Jewish Holocaust survivor written by his son, Art Spiegelman, who was trying to understand his father and grasp what happened during the Holocaust. While showing the path of one survivor Spiegelman helped tell the story of not only the Holocaust but also the damaging affect the Holocaust had on its survivors after their liberation from the concentration camps. He told the story of a survivor who continued to live and deal with the mental and psychological harm the Holocaust had caused him, but more importantly, he listened to and strived to understand the life of a Holocaust survivor.

The events and lessons learned from the Holocaust need to be understood by everyone, because everyone has the right to know what happened, and the responsibility to never allow something like the Holocaust to happen again. In order to realize these goals I can work to understand more deeply and thoroughly what happened in the Holocaust, Darfur, Cambodia, and other occurrences of genocide around the world. I can create awareness by being more aware myself, and by knowing that reality is not just what I experience but what everyone experiences. Ignorance, like ignorance of the past and of people, causes prejudice which leads to hate and violence. By destroying ignorance with knowledge, we can eradicate hate with education and an understanding of the world in which we live.

The Nazis and every other oppressive regime that ever committed an act of genocide were able to do so because they were able to drive apart and label people. They instilled fear, hatred, and obedience into people, and tried to silence those who refused to be filled with hate and see an entire people get destroyed. Genocides like the Holocaust can be prevented from reoccurring by knowing that everyone is human and nothing separates us so much, or makes us so different that we should want to kill each other over it. If the anger, hate, and prejudice that

leads to violence and genocide is going to be stopped we need to stand up for what we know is right.

The Holocaust needs to be remembered in order to appreciate and learn from the power and passion of the people who overcame, dealt with, or refused to be a part of the terror of the Holocaust. Young people today can combat hate and discrimination by never remaining indifferent to the lives and situations of other people, and by knowing that the incalculable value of every individual can never be diminished or destroyed by the hate, violence, or prejudice of another.

Bibliography

Works Cited

De Jonge, A. (1986). *Stalin and the Shaping of the Soviet Union*. New York: William Morrow and Company, Inc.

H. res. 356: in the house of representatives, U.S.. (2003, October 20). Retrieved from http://rrwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname='108_cong_bills&docid=f:hr356h.txt.pdf

Works Consulted

Frank, A. (1952). *The Diary of a Young Girl*. Garden City N.Y.: Double Day.

Hari, D. (2008). *The Translator: A Tribesman's Memoir of Darfur*. New York: Random House.

Spiegelman, A. (1991). *Maus*. New York: Pantheon Books.