

Sarah Marx
Chevy Chase, Maryland

It has been almost 72 years since Kristallnacht, and multiple generations since the horror of the Holocaust - long enough that that genocide can, to some, seem safely, blandly distant. The way we daily trivialize the Holocaust is astonishing; it is invoked as metaphor for everything from health care reform to difficult exams, distilled by Hollywood into films that allow us the false ease of a beginning, middle and end, spotlighted as tourist enticement or exploited in an effort to sell tickets or garner passing grades, used often, if inexplicably, as a punch line by comedians in search of shock. In the meantime, genocide itself has persisted: in Bosnia, in Rwanda, in Darfur. Is this what "never forget" looks like? Must the memory of mass murder stay with us not as heart-wrenching knowledge, but as a nagging thought with no more impact than the recollection of last night's dinner? How can we keep the painful reminder of tragedy alive without submerging ourselves constantly in the agony of remembrance, or - perhaps worse - reducing that tragedy to a cipher?

It is nearly impossible for young people in this era, us third- and fourth-generation observers, to write properly about the Holocaust. There is nothing we can put onto paper that can approach the unimaginable scope of it, the incalculable devastation. Poetry, with its uncanny ability to compress the vast into a few lines, may come close; fiction, too, if very well-executed. But upon reading the testimonies of survivors, the horrific records of a world gone mad, we realize at what a distance history puts us. Attempting to walk in their shoes, to graft a first-person point of view onto a third-person lens, is appropriative at best, outright destructive at worst. When we try to draw morals from the Holocaust, our facile conclusions are shameful. So

many thinkers and public figures have attempted this, and in doing so have reduced their concept of the Holocaust to a simplistic fable, a morality play that ends in one Aesopian statement. As we know from survivors' stories, from the specters that have stayed with them all their lives, in

Education is key - education not only through secondary sources or easy conclusions, but through the voices of survivors. It is by now a common trope that tragedy is made more understandable with a human face; we are given someone to root for, someone to identify with, someone for whom we can shed personalized tears. It is all the more powerful, then, with a plurality of human faces: a history structured on the singular lives and experiences of those who endured it. We are far less likely to trivialize tragedy, and far more likely to internalize it as a reminder of the incomprehensible consequences of hatred, if we are exposed to it in the context of human beings' own experiences, than if we hear only statistics and history-book generalizations. Spielberg's audio/video archive, and the many written autobiographies by writers like Primo Levi, Elie Wiesel and Gerda Weissmann Klein, are critical. So, too, is it critical that we impress upon students the very gravity and magnitude of the Holocaust, and the inappropriate nature of its trivialization - and the understanding that, for the generation of survivors and the generations that follow, the Holocaust continues to be a profoundly relevant and deeply personal tragedy. We must also treat it as a quiet, ever-present, almost subconscious reminder to examine our own actions, and to a point, those of others.

But, in Levi's words, "It happened, therefore it can happen again." This, unfortunately, is the startling fact we must grapple with if we are to answer questions of narrative and memory. There is nothing we can do, it seems, that could serve as a foolproof antidote to future genocide. History can serve as a warning, but we will never know to what extent - after all, World War I

was once called "the war to end all wars." The Holocaust cannot be taken passively as a token to ward off history; only with effort can it become an effective deterrent. It is simplistic and patently false to assert that knowledge of the Holocaust, in itself, will prevent its happening again, for the basic reason that *intolerance persists*. Despite our efforts to preserve and remember, we see fanatic racists and anti-Semites every day condoning the Holocaust, or irrationally denying it on the basis of their own bigotry. We may use the Holocaust as a call to action - perhaps rightly so - but we cannot trust that it will, on its own, act as prevention.

Our task, then, becomes not only to educate ourselves and others about the Holocaust, not only to treat it differently than we would quotidian topics of conversation, but to enhance that knowledge with work against contemporary bigotry. We grow up, and raise our children, in a world that has seen Shoah, and the responsibilities inherent in that inheritance are staggering. It is our duty to do what we can, to work against discrimination on a large scale and in our own households, so that we do not allow the foundations of genocide to sprout on our watch. And it is our duty to remember, and to treat those memories with the respect of those in mourning.

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