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March 31, 2015

*“Why is it important that the remembrance, history, and lessons of the Holocaust be passed to a new generation?”*

In Steven Spielberg’s documentary *The Last Days* he stated a truly resounding line, “We have to recognize that people are not born with hatred, they acquire it. We have the responsibility to listen to the voices of history so that future generations never forget what so few lived to tell.” As the years pass by, the horrifying tragedies that occurred during World War II become a faraway memory, an experience that much of the world cannot understand. The Holocaust provides current and future generations with the education necessary to learn the importance of acceptance, celebrating our differences, and standing up for truth and what is right, even when so few stand beside us.

Having studied the Holocaust, I believe one of the most prevalent lessons I learned was of the power of the individual and the impact someone can have on something much larger than him or herself. In the most extreme circumstances of adversity, the prisoners of Auschwitz-Birkenau formulated a plan to blow up Crematorium IV. Men and women, such as Roza Robota, collected gunpowder in matchboxes and created rudimentary grenades despite the personal risks and consequences of the operation. These events led to the Sonderkommando revolt of October 1944, an event that proved to the Nazi leaders that they were not untouchable and their prisoners were capable of resistance. A small group stood in the face of the Final Solution, unwilling to accept what they were experiencing. In my opinion, these individuals exhibited truly unbreakable spirits.

Another example of this is the villagers of Le Chambon-sur-Lignon in France. The Chambonnais living in the French countryside were aware of the atrocities many faced during the war, so under the guidance of Pastor André Trocmé they began sheltering anyone who sought refuge. In their minds and their hearts, they knew that persecuting Jews and other "undesirables" in the eyes of the Germans was not justified, so they took the humane action of aiding men, women, and children. Gathering supplies and helping the students find a place in local schools were just a few of the selfless acts they performed, in addition to creating false identification cards and helping Jews escape to Switzerland.

Working as a community, Le Chambon was able to help hundreds of people at a time when doors were shut and eyes were diverted at the thought of helping the Jewish. Despite all outside opposition, the Chambonnais did what they knew what was right. Religion and politics had no effect on their decision to help the Jewish people, because the persecution during the war wasn't just a Jewish problem, it was a human problem - and the cost was innocent lives.

The Holocaust has also shown the world that looking away and not intervening in the face of injustice has fatal consequences. Nations across the world have the responsibility to look out for one another and help in times of crisis and desperation. During World War II and the years preceding, many Jewish families tried to leave their homelands and seek refuge in South America, England, and the United States. The United States' strict immigrant quotas denied hundreds of thousands of European Jews entry, which could have prevented the deaths of countless innocent lives. Despite the advocacy of various relief organizations, many powerful countries denied European Jews asylum due to anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

Finally, I believe that knowledge of the atrocities of World War II must be shared, to educate the next generation. The Holocaust is a significant example of the dangers of prejudice

and stereotyping, both of which are topics of which children should learn. No man, woman, or child should ever be discriminated against for his or her race, religion, gender, or beliefs. The victims of the Holocaust are not only those of Jewish faith, but political criminals, Jehovah's Witnesses, disabled people, gypsies, and homosexuals. A lesser known fact about the Holocaust is that of the millions of survivors, homosexuals were still persecuted following World War II and were never given reparations for their imprisonment. The continued existence of injustice toward any human being should be stopped, for the individual should have the freedom to live their life without constant fear of imprisonment or abuse. As the Holocaust stands as a testament to ignorance and close-mindedness, the next generation should learn to open their eyes, their hearts, and their minds. Learning from the past can prevent a tragedy in the future, something we should never forget.