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The Battle for “Never Again”: Our Call to Duty

If a child was crying, would you comfort him? If a woman was beaten, would you tend to her wounds? If an entire family was raped, brutalized and murdered, would you call for the hand of justice? If you answered yes to any of those questions, I assert you are a liar. Children are crying; women are being beaten; and not only families, but entire villages and countries are being slaughtered. And what have we as a country done about it? People have indeed fallen into the role of ignorant citizen. We have collectively adopted an individualistic attitude toward global affairs. A familiar proverb asserts, “Hear not evil, see no evil, and speak no evil.” The U.S. has taken this advice to heart. We as a society refuse to hear about world issues, we turn a blind eye toward those who suffer, and we never speak up or out. Ignoring evil does not make it disappear. On the contrary, it gives it free reign to seep into every crevice of the earth. To make “never again” a reality for genocide, and human rights abuse in general, we must **hear**, we must **see**, we must **speak**.

As Americans, genocide is not a factor in daily life. We can walk down the street freely without worry of being gunned down. We can go to school without worrying about air raids and bombs. We can live a day without grimly wondering, “Is it my last?” Indeed, we as a society have trouble even imagining such places where statements like this are a reality. However, there are places; many places. For example, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, Angola, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, and Darfur. This is only a short list of the many places that are experiences the horrors of genocide and human rights abuse as we speak. So why is it, with so many places under attack that we never hear of the injustices being done? When we turn on the news in America, we are bombarded by stories about celebrities and the newest beauty trend. Darfur and other such countries are very rarely on the news prompter. As Americans, a large portion of us are kept ignorant of the horrors of genocide. In 2007, the Genocide Intervention Network took a poll on how much Americans knew about genocide that was currently occurring. 40% of those polled said very little; 16% said nothing at all. This statistic, while heartbreaking, shows the dirty truth that most American’s don’t know the brutal facts. If no hears about the plights of our global brothers and sisters, we will never be educated and we will never care about helping those who suffer. The first step in ending genocide is opening our hears and hearing the dirty truth about the current state of the world: it is not pretty. However, we must hear in order to heed. We must **hear** about evil.

As Americans, we do not look out our bedroom windows to see starving children, bleeding soldiers, and disfigured victims of a savage attack. The view from our windows is most usually pleasant, quite distant from the victims of genocide and the vision of the savage truth. Even though we cannot see it close up, we have to see how pressing an issue the total annihilation of races and religions around the globe is. We cannot be afraid to face the subject. Currently, some public schools require the Holocaust to be taught in schools. However, no schools yet require current genocide education. However, many people are in support of educating children on current genocide. When polled, the Genocide Intervention Network found 48% of voters strongly supported such an education program, which is great. However, 16% totally opposed such an education. We need to be completely unanimous in voting through a required genocide education. There is nothing to be feared by the truth, and it is the only way to instate a change. Not only must we see the genocide, but we need to see and comprehend the ramifications. Genocide results in not just death. It results in economic destruction, global instability, and the annihilation of entire peoples and cultures. Paul Kagame, the President of Rwanda, gave a speech about the results of the genocide in Rwanda that listed some of the ramifications as “a divided society, collapsed socio-economic infrastructure, absence of institutions, and a discredited international community.” There are other ramifications besides death, and we as Americans need to see this blatant truth. We cannot ignore these far away figures; we must look past our individual selves and see the lives of others around the globe. To end genocide, we must open our eyes. We must **see** the evil.

As Americans, we have been taught that our voice matters. Every time an election rolls around, we are reminded that we have a say; we have a voice! If this assertion is true, and I believe it is, our voices cannot be limited to the decisions being made in our own country. We, as global actors, should be using our voice in all situations. We cannot diffuse the responsibility away from ourselves, and we can't sit around and hope that someone else puts an end to the horrors. In a poll taken in 2007 by the Genocide Intervention Network, 46% of those polled said that ending genocide should be a high priority for America. However, only 17% of those polled said they were very likely to volunteer to help stop genocide; and 21% said they definitely wouldn't help. These numbers do not add up. If we, as a country, think genocide is a problem, then we as individuals need to be willing to act. These issues do not fall on certain people; they fall on all of us. We must speak out against the injustices of the world. The Genocide Intervention Network published a paper showing how intricate civilian support is in stopping genocide: “As history has shown, citizen action has been the key to mobilizing governments. The fact that citizens throughout the United States and the world made it so governments had to listen led to the success of the Civil Rights Movement in the U.S., the fall of the apartheid regime in South Africa, human rights efforts in India, and the list goes on.” There are many groups to join, and to lend your

voice to, such as the Genocide Intervention Network and STAND: A Student Anti-Genocide Coalition. Wherever you are, whoever you are, there is something you can do to help. By shouting our discontent with the state of the world we will be a force to be reckoned with. To stop genocide, we must shout out loud. We must **speak** of evil.

Evil cannot be eradicated by hope. It is a force that must be actively combated. We, as global warriors, must be the ones to combat. Education will be our ammo, words our weapons, and faith in humankind our shield. Hearing, seeing and speaking will lead to something much more important: changing. With our participation, never again will no longer just be a vague, philanthropic notion. It will be a battle cry echoed across the world.

Works Cited

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