“A single human being has the power to make a difference in the lives of thousands” (Yellin). Raoul Wallenberg, throughout his astonishing and heroic life, had found the power within. Heroes we need today do not need super powers. They speak up in the face of injustice. As the world is being torn apart, I need to be informed. I need to take a stand, and do my part. Today, people have become so busy that they are losing sight of what really matters. Raoul Wallenberg examined the world with a purpose. A story that deserves to be told to the public is the saving of thousands of lives of Jews who were taken into concentration camps during World War II. Raoul’s devotion and heroism was second to none. In this day and age, not many people make drastic efforts to help save countries from ethnic cleansing. The ones helping out are not publicized. The heroics displayed by Raoul Wallenberg made me realize that perseverance and courage aren’t just qualities of a human being, but ways of life. I was inspired to speak my mind, fight for honor, and bring about a better tomorrow. Maybe if we recognized those who put effort to stand up, take charge, and lead the way, others will contribute in the same way to stop such brutality.

Using every means at his disposal, the 32-year-old succeeded in rescuing over 100,000 Jews within a six-month period (Yellin). Leading a one-man crusade is a task many people would call impossible. Raoul used methods such as protective passports to help against the Germans and Hungarians, safe housing in which Wallenberg had searched for buildings to rent, eventually finding thirty-two which he declared “extraterritorial buildings”. A low cost housing project was excelled by Raoul, placing 35,000 people in buildings designed for fewer than 5,000 in Budapest (Schreiber). He pretended to be a Swedish Diplomat, giving out citizenships. The names of Jews were changed, so they became ‘Swedes’. Raoul knew the Germans and Hungarians were weak for flashy symbols. He printed passes in yellow and blue with the coat of arms of the Three Crowns of Sweden. Thanks to his efforts, Jews didn’t have to wear the identifiable yellow star. His best ability was to revive hope. The Nazis knew Raoul very well as
he bribed, manipulated, and confronted them tirelessly. As a result, he slept at a different place every night. One day, his car was blown up. After all of this, Raoul Wallenberg had disappeared. No one had evidence as to where he went, or with whom he left. Russian vice foreign minister Dekanosov declared, “Russian military authorities had taken measures to protect Wallenberg” (Rauch). Smoltsov, a member of Russia’s medical services, supposedly informed his superiors that Wallenberg had died on July 17, 1947, in his cell, presumably of a heart attack (Berger). With Raoul taking a stand, those around him looked down upon his heroics, and had enough. They had enough of this one-man crusade taking over by storm.

People shudder at seeing random acts of violence, having a war happen outside the door, or living day by day with constant fear. Wallenberg is a perfect example. He spoke his mind. Then, he stated his opinion. Finally, he criticized those around him. The Holocaust lasted from 1941 to 1945. In this span, 6 million Jews were killed with thousands of lives saved due to Raoul.

“Don’t let the fear of the time it will take to accomplish something stand in the way of your doing it. The time will pass anyway; we might as well put that passing time to the best possible use” (Khurana). No matter how long it was until the very last concentration camp was saved, Raoul did not give up. His mind was set on his goal. Fear was never a quality Raoul had to worry about. Raoul stuck with his plan to the very end with a mindset that he cannot fail. He thought of an idea and made his individual action into something larger than he had ever imagined – a global impact. It was the impossible dream. He fought the unbeatable foe. I think of Raoul Wallenberg as a painter. Before beginning to paint, he thought of an idea for his masterpiece. He thought of saving countless Jews with the use of citizenship passes we know as “Schutzpasses”. The world around him was filled with violence. His ode was a glorious one, but what he had seen around him was a blood bath on every corner. The Jews needed a new start and he would be the provider. The painter named Raoul saw the world in violent shades of red with the greens mixing with yellow dyes, the reds and blues melting, as he saw a masterpiece of his own. He created a picture of a free Jew who would not be manipulated, or brought down. Wallenberg was a hero. “Raoul Wallenberg kept on fighting in spite of the ruling powers of evil. In many cases he managed to save Jews from clutches of the Nazis with his firm action and courage as his only weapon” (Rauch). He truly was an example of an “upstander” due to his
excellence, courage, and determination to keep on striving; even with the bad times being the worst they’ve ever been.

Reading about a heroic man like Wallenberg standing tall, I was inspired by his actions. As six million Jews were killed during the Holocaust, someone needed to act. I may not even know what is happening on the other side of the world, but I do wonder what I can do to make the slightest difference. With 365 days in a year, 24 hours in a day, 60 minutes in an hour, 60 seconds in a minute, the clock is ticking every step I take, but I wonder if the steps I take be wise, or will they lead to a crack. Will this crack lead me to a fall? During this time, we need to act. Raoul Wallenberg didn’t know how much time he needed, or how much time he had to take his stand. He quickly rose up to the equation, determined all of the values, and found a solution.

What inspired me about Raoul was that anyone in this world can make a difference, and let no one tell you, otherwise. No matter how strong, how big, or how destructive my foe may be, standing up is one prime example of being the better person. I’ve been inspired to look past my fears as I look towards a positive tomorrow. When I was still attending elementary school, bullying was something that occurred daily. Moving into a new community meant new challenges down the road. I saw pairs of eyes looking at me, no matter where I want. Moving into a community that was dominated by cultures that were not Polish, I was one of the few in the community. Never did I think such an exciting time in my life would be brought down by racist remarks, cruellness, and hatred. I was looked down upon because of my Polish roots. I was simply something new. I was called names, but it wasn’t just me, so were the rest of the Polish speaking students. We marched down towards the group that made fun of us as a daily routine. Like Poland aggressively tried to get back on the map of Europe during history, we aggressively stood up for respect, honor, and a better tomorrow. We spoke our minds, but once a compromise wasn’t reached, things began to get physical. With adrenaline pumping, we felt we had no choice. Before I knew it, the principal quickly rushed over, and took us to her office. We talked it out like human beings. A compromise was settled. We had our dignity back, living day by day in peace. As Winston Churchill once said, “Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.” (Courage Is What It Takes to Stand up and Speak).

Raoul’s perseverance, selflessness, and world-changing effect continue to inspire people worldwide. As some would say, do not forget the past because the past is deemed to repeat itself,
but with upstanders such as Raoul Wallenberg, we have a reason to sit by the curb and clap for his excellence. We can’t all be heroes, but we can all make a difference.

Works Cited


