

Dear Bystander
by
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Dear Bystander

I see piles and piles of shoes. What are their stories? Some of them are no bigger than the palm of my hand, how could their owners have possibly been a threat to anybody? Some of the shoes look expensive; others have clearly had to be repaired many times over. How could the world close its eyes and plead ignorance while six million pairs of shoes piled up? Were you blind to what the benches, textbooks and posters were saying? Where did you think that the uniformed men with the big guns were taking your neighbours?

Edmund Burke once said, "All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing." There were groups, such as the White Rose, which tried to fight the Nazis. Why did you not join them? If you disagreed with the regime why did you not do everything that you could to stop it? If you had all stopped allowing fear to cloud your judgement and rather imagined what was happening to the people, who had, a few years prior to the terror, been considered your equals, perhaps the history books would have been written differently.

Unfortunately, you were not brave. You kept your eyes tightly shut so that you could not see the human rights abuses that surrounded you. You looked the other way while soldiers marched over freedom, safety, dignity and life. You should feel ashamed.

I apologise for the harshness of my words. I have realised that you and I are, in fact, very similar. I often take my human rights for granted. I forget that while I eat dinner, there are children dying of malnutrition. While I am studying for an important test, there are people who will never learn to spell their own names. As my mom kisses me goodnight, there are AIDS orphans trying to run households.

I judged you for being indifferent while six million people were killed but I should probably judge myself by those same standards. There ^{are} currently child soldiers fighting for governments and rebel groups around the world. These children are forced to take drugs, work as sex slaves and even worse, kill. At the same time there is human trafficking taking place. There are countries denying women basic rights. There are countries where people work like slaves in sweat shops. In other parts of the world people are treated like criminals for being disabled or for having different sexual orientations. What am I doing to stop this?

You and I are very similar. We have both tried to hide from the truth. The only difference between us is that I have an opportunity to fight the injustices occurring at the moment. I have learnt from both your mistakes and my own. The story of the Holocaust has taught many people about the

seriousness of discrimination and what prejudiced ideas and words can lead to. Today, society acknowledges how important upholding human rights is. We have learnt what can happen when human rights are denied but now we have the tough task of fighting the injustices that are happening around the world and hopefully ensuring that they never happen again. Rollo May said, "Hatred is not the opposite of love; apathy is." History has taught us how dangerous it is to be apathetic. It is time for that lesson to influence the way in which we live.

Yours sincerely

A fellow bystander

WORDS: 573

CONTEXTUALISATION:

I was inspired by the story of a young boy who died in a death camp. This story was told by a historian who had examined his shoe. It saddened me to think of all of the stories of people who had died during the Holocaust, most of these stories have never been told. It disappointed me that not more people were involved in resisted the Nazis but I realise that we cannot judge them for being apathetic regarding human rights' violations happening around them because we do the same.