

The Mira Kimmelman 'Learning from the Holocaust' Contest

There's precisely one reason why the Holocaust is remembered for exactly the devastating and horrific period that it was; its survivors courageously shared their stories and the world refused to let their words drown in history. The world has upheld the lessons and carried the raw, relentless pain of both survivors and victims for decades; the pain never wavering and bleeding into the future. Students look upon black and white photos in glossy history textbooks with horrified looks while adults visit Holocaust museums with teary eyes; imagining the bloodshed. The world has remained captivated by the Holocaust because we have protected and maintained the very essence of the genocide; its lessons and its artifacts. As Mira Kimmelman eloquently put it, we can continue educating future generations on the legacy of the Holocaust by teaching, telling, and reading the lessons of the Holocaust.

As influential as the lessons of the Holocaust ring to those who learn of it in its wake, nothing can compare to the impact of experiencing the Holocaust first-hand as Ms. Kimmelman did. To experience the horror that most of today's society has only seen in media form or imagined with the limited capacity of the human mind is truly a unique and difficult experience. How do you live in a society which hasn't experienced the events that changed your life forever? Or live in the face of the few despicable people who deny the very existence of what molded you to be the person you live as today? It is undoubtedly an arduous duty to carry the experience of the Holocaust on one's shoulders like a boulder covered in red paint; bound to leave a stain. Yet, the experiences of the Holocaust equips survivors with the everlasting wisdom and knowledge of the lessons of the Holocaust.

For Ms. Kimmelman, her perception was undoubtedly changed by the two integral lessons she learned surviving the Holocaust; that there are always beacons of light in the darkness and that humanity must uphold its responsibility to learn and act from instances of injustices. The Holocaust has shown Ms. Kimmelman that even in the largest mass genocide in history, the inner goodness of people is still tangible, even amongst all the darkness. The selflessness of those who rescued survivors of the Holocaust is a prominent part of history and can not be shadowed by simultaneous evil. Despite war-time propaganda and general public opinion of the time as well as the danger and potential consequences, there were still thousands of people who participated in the rescues and escapes of victims of the Holocaust. These often-hidden heroes of the Holocaust weren't all people in positions of power with unlimited resources and finances to make the escapes possible; most were ordinary people who sought out to undo the injustice as best as they could. As Ms. Kimmelman wrote, "[the heroes] risked their lives to save Jews from a certain death." Ms. Kimmelman navigated her life with this lesson in mind and worked tirelessly to share this pearl of wisdom with the rest of the world.

Unfortunately, as beautiful as the actions of the anonymous few who helped Holocaust victims are; it can never undo the negative connotation associated with the word "Holocaust". We often look at the horrific images of the Holocaust with gaping mouths and wide eyes, thinking to ourselves, "how did the world let this happen? Why did no one step in?" Yet, the world is faced with another mass genocide today and the world is silent. For years, the Chinese government has been organizing the repression of the nation's Uighur population; a small and mostly Muslim minority. According to "Concentration camps and forced labor: China's repression of the Uighurs, explained", an article by Vox, "the Chinese Communist Party has arbitrarily detained between 1 million and 3 million other Uighurs in so-called "reeducation

centers” and forced them to undergo psychological indoctrination programs, such as studying communist propaganda... Chinese officials have also reportedly used waterboarding and other forms of torture, including sexual abuse, as part of the indoctrination process.”

The Uighur population is being forced into concentration camps, which are dubbed “re-education camps” by the government, and are forced to partake in direct violations of their Islamic faith. They are forced to drink alcohol, eat pork, and are hooked to IV drips during the holy month of Ramadan; preventing them from fasting during the month (an integral part of the Islamic faith). The Uighur Muslims are exploited for cheap labor and physically abused. The horrifying footage of them being dragged in handcuffs and forcefully removed from their homes presents a ghost-like representation of the Holocaust; it is happening again.

As we have learned from Ms. Kimmelman, the world can not afford another Holocaust; the devastating effects of it still present itself today in current society. The effects of another mass genocide would be devastating. Yet, it is too late, and the death toll in China rises every day; the world moving onwards without the innocent Uighurs murdered for their faith.

We must embody Ms. Kimmelman’s messages today as we face a contemporary instance of injustice. We must be the beacons of light that Ms. Kimmelman writes about; the courageous heroes in the midst of a gruesome genocide. We may not be able to directly facilitate the escapes of the Uighurs, but we have something just as important, our voices. The power our voices hold is enough to be categorized as a hero. With our voices, we can protest, spread awareness, and educate others on the injustice happening in our world. Just as we must never forget the Holocaust and the lessons we learned, we must apply those lessons as needed. We must tell others, write, and teach the cruel happenings of China today. As humans, we hold the

responsibility to take the lessons we have learned from the tragic reign of Hitler and use them to do whatever we can to stop tyranny once and for all. To quote the forceful words of Ms. Kimmelman herself, “[i]f we remain indifferent to human suffering, it can happen again; it can happen here, and who knows who the next victims will be?”

Works Cited

Concentration camps and forced labor: China's repression of the Uighurs, explained

"Concentration Camps And Forced Labor: China'S Repression Of The Uighurs, Explained". *Vox*, 2020,

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