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Stand Together

Gestapo. Ghettos. Genocide. “Never Again” means condemning the injustices of the Holocaust and making sure that they are never repeated.

Gestapo. During the Holocaust the Gestapo, the German secret police under Nazi rule, partook in horrible, ruthless crimes against foreign Jews. Many of them are outlined in *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, who is a Jewish Holocaust survivor: “Without passion or haste, they [the Gestapo] shot their prisoners [foreign Jews], who were forced to approach the trench one by one and offer their necks. Infants were tossed into the air and used as targets for the machine guns” (page 6). It is horrifying to think about how foreign Jews, from infants to adults, were brutally murdered by the Gestapo just because of their Jewish identity. I believe that no one should be discriminated against, especially for their identity. Your identity is something that you should be able to showcase and be proud of. But, during the Holocaust the Gestapo took that pride away from the foreign Jews, which is something that should never be repeated again.

Ghettos. Jews during the Holocaust were forced out of their homes by the Germans and subjected to living in ghettos, areas where only Jews were forced to live. The Germans made sure to keep the overcrowded ghettos isolated: “But, as it [the home in which Wiesel’s family lived for a time] occupied a corner, the windows facing the street outside the ghetto had to be

sealed” (page 11). In turn, when an inspector of the Hungarian police, a friend of Elie’s father, tried to warn the Jews in Elie’s town (Sighet, Transylvania) about danger, the Jews were not able to open the windows in time and speak to the inspector. It is extremely discriminatory how Jews were forced to be isolated from non-Jews during the Holocaust. I believe that there should always be equality and that no one should ever be forced out of their home, like the Jews were during the Holocaust; this is why it is important to recognize the injustices that occurred during the Holocaust, so that we can recognize similar injustices that occur today and work together to stand against them.

Genocide. 6 million Jews and millions of others were murdered during the Holocaust due to the Nazi Party’s orders. Many of them were sent to concentration camps, where they were either subjected to horrible conditions or killed: “Béla Katz, the son of an important merchant of [Elie’s] town, had arrived in Birkenau with the transport one week ahead of [Elie and his father]...He [Béla Katz] told us that having been chosen because of his strength, he had been forced to place his own father’s body into the furnace” (page 35). It is terrible to think about how so many people were murdered in concentration camps. Also, it is horrifying how the Nazis would make sons kill their own fathers if the sons wanted to stay alive. I think that no one should be murdered because of their identity and that family members should not have to choose between their life or the life of another family member. The murders that occurred during the Holocaust should never be repeated again.

As an “upstander” and a person who bears witness to the stories told by those who survived the Holocaust, I have the responsibilities of listening with open ears and listening with an open heart in order to ensure that the phrase “Never Again” becomes a reality. I believe that it is important to not only recognize the injustices that occurred during the Holocaust but to really

understand what happened during the Holocaust and why it should never happen again. Moishe the Beadle, a foreign Jew who survived the slaughter of foreign Jews, came back to Sighet to warn Elie and the rest of the Jews about the danger to come. But, the Jews of Sighet would not listen to Moishe the Beadle: “But people not only refused to believe his [Moishe’s] tales, they refused to listen” (page 7). Not even Elie, who Moishe the Beadle helped study Kabbalah, would believe Moishe. I believe that in contrast, it is important to believe and listen to witnesses of the Holocaust because by doing so, I can learn from the experiences of Holocaust survivors in order to make sure that the injustices that occurred never happen again. Even though it may be hard to hear about the injustices that occurred during the Holocaust, an upstander bears witness.

As a global community, I believe we must work together in order to maintain a place where everyone feels safe. We can do this by being upstanders and calling out any anti-Semitism or hate we see or hear because hate has no place in our community. We must work together to maintain a place where people are not discriminated against because of their identity. We can do this by continuing the increased implementation of teaching about tolerance and acceptance in our schools. We must stand together against hate and intolerance to foster a safe and accepting community for all.