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*Plumes of ash submerge the sky in hues of slate and ebony. Tears cascade down mud-streaked cheeks, wiped away with calloused fingers. Fear festers amongst lost souls. The vibrations of a whip sear the silence. Pangs of hunger devastate skeletal bodies as the stench of decay permeates the air. The austere camp beckons death with open arms.*

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The events of the Holocaust were so appalling in nature that they merited a term of their own: genocide. Coined by Polish-born lawyer Raphael Lemkin, the phrase combines the ancient Greek word ‘genos’ meaning race or tribe, and the Latin ‘cide’ which translates to the action of killing, thereby elucidating upon the destruction of a particular ethnic group. The international community has since condemned the horror and brutality that took place during the Holocaust, nevertheless, it is frightening to consider the many parallels one can draw to our contemporary state of affairs. For society is yet to elude the confines of prejudice, discrimination, and injustice. Minorities across the world remain silenced; forced to imbibe majority culture and disregard the richness of their heritage. And as toxic political rhetorics continue to emerge, engulfing communities with their malice and hostility, we bear witness to both religious and racial persecution. With reports surfacing of the forced indoctrination of the Uyghur Muslims in China, the ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the Rohingya in Myanmar, and the targeted murders of the Nuer in South Sudan, it is evident that genocide is no longer a term of the past. It shrouds our present.

When confronted with such atrocities, it is our responsibility as a human race, that takes precedence. And although the promise of 'never again' still rings true today, we must contemplate whether these two words alone are capable of halting a mass extermination in its tracks. Intervention and mitigation are idealistic in nature, suggesting that the strength of humanity shall bring about justice. However, a more proactive response to such moral transgressions must be characterized by the following: awareness, solidarity, and accountability.

The obsidian shadow of the Holocaust pervaded due to ignorance and delusion. It was unfathomable that one man alone could institute such barbarity, and as such, the Jews of Germany and its neighboring countries remained inattentive to their surroundings. Eager to clench onto the illusion that they would be spared from the grisly tales that disseminated across villages and towns. Holocaust survivor Eliezer Wiesel recalls in his memoir *Night*, the evasiveness and complacency exercised by fellow Jews in Sighet. The province was ensconced in the mountains of Transylvania, isolated from the Anti-Semitism that erupted throughout Germany. Wiesel narrates, "Yes we even doubted [Hitler's] resolve to exterminate us. The Germans were already in our town, the Fascists were already in power, the verdict was already out- and the Jews of Sighet were smiling" (pages 8-10).

The international community was heedless to Hitler's schemes as well, unwilling to comprehend the certainty of immediate Jewish persecution, while the Nazi Party spared no expense in cloaking their myriad of misdeeds, destroying any conceivable evidence. The truth had been buried. This alarming pattern is present among today's cases of 'ethnic cleansing' as world leaders absolve themselves of responsibility, deny all accusations, and impede external investigations. Yet our ability to address these crises and provide humanitarian aid is contingent upon our knowledge of the situation. Injustice can be defeated only by truth, for information holds power. Universal reform and dialogue can be engaged strictly after complete transparency is ensured. It is our utmost duty to shed light upon any information we are acquainted with so that we can strive to ameliorate the underlying causes of such prejudice and respond to these grievances with preparedness and haste.

With regards to solidarity and accountability, the two are interwoven facets, for the former stimulates the latter. To invoke an old adage, 'there is strength in numbers.' By presenting a united front, we actively denounce these acts of intolerance. A single voice is easily drowned out amongst the commotion, yet when thousands of voices speak in unison, they are heard. As Wiesel reflects, "We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented" (page 118). It is often minority and disenfranchised communities that are the victims of discriminatory violence. Yet their plight is overshadowed by majority groups who are endowed with societal authority and the ability to advocate for themselves. The Holocaust attests to the notion that malicious intent cannot be dissuaded with ease. Yet a single spark is all that is needed to light a fire of resistance. Those responsible for condoning or bolstering acts of injustice can no longer be permitted to escape unscathed. For an absence of repercussion denotes forgiveness. As Wiesel notes, "...One person of integrity can make a difference, a difference of life and death. As long as one dissident is in prison, our freedom will not be true. As long as one child is hungry, our life will be filled with anguish and shame" (page 120).

The silhouette of the Holocaust shall remain cast upon our history, whilst its evils echo with potency. And although we may feel inclined to cower in shame and reproach, consigning our past to oblivion, however flawed, is perhaps the greatest crime we could commit against those who are no longer alive to tell their stories. We must bear witness. We must remember. Our past is interwoven with our present, yet every tapestry is entitled to a new beginning. "For in the end, it is all about memory, its sources and its magnitude, and, of course, its consequences" (epilogue, *Night*).