Clara Coyote

509 744 9535

claracoyote14@gmail.com

Chase Middle School

Grade 8

To Understand Means to Take a Stand

By Clara Coyote

A ten minute segment on the nightly news - that’s all that the mass killing of its citizens by the Syrian government is to Americans. We have listened to the news for a long time, but after months of unrest, the words “missiles” and “civilian deaths” play like broken records, and we tune it out to check our smartphones. We all want the killing to end, but it is so much easier to let the government get their noses in it, rather than for us to spend our time on people thousands of miles away. In my 8th grade class, while discussing mass murder going on right now in the world, my teacher asked how many of us would try to stop the Holocaust if we had lived in that time. Naturally, everyone raised their hands. Next, she asked how many of us knew about the killing going on in Syria, and a majority raised their hands. After realizing Mrs. Areta’s point, I could feel the guilt blazing through the room. What could we possibly do to end it anyway? Well, I just may have the answer.

President John F. Kennedy once said, “Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country.” According to MSN.com, the U.S. has provided nearly $385,000,000 in humanitarian aid to the people being attacked by the Syrian government. But, with over 70,000 dead and counting and more than 2,500,000 refugees fleeing for safety, the need is growing by the day. You cannot transplant a flower, water it once, and then expect enough blooms for a bouquet. We Americans need to continue the effort ourselves and show everyone what we can do to represent and support our country!

 On July 28, 1942, many secret Jewish organizations banded together to form an armed defense unit called the Jewish Combat Organization. Later, the Jewish Military Union was formed in resistance to massive deportations, and they joined forces in what is now called the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. While they had pistols and explosives, I propose that in honor of those brave warriors, the kids of Chase Middle School arm themselves with allowances and donations. The whole point of us learning about the Holocaust in our classes is to make sure it never happens again, right? Well, although it is a government committing mass murder of its own people - and not a genocide of one people against another - they are both mass killings - just in a different time and place and involving different people. If we are to learn from history, we need to put what we learn into action!

I am a student representative for my school, and after working on many fundraisers, I have seen the stupendous giving power of our community. I know that compassion runs far and wide in our school. I want to start a campaign where every time a student is moved by something in the books our entire 8th grade is reading about the Holocaust, that student will put some money into a jar to support UNICEF’s mission to help Syrian children in need. The time has come for us to stop being horses with blinders on and try to experience the world around us.

I remember a teacher saying to me once that some people will learn about life from a book, while others will learn by living it. I believe the only way we can prevent a tragedy like the Holocaust from ever reoccurring is to make sure our children learn from books and real life. The Holocaust unit is a powerful one, but when the quarter ends, many forget about it and move on with their everyday lives. The fact that my parents took the same math course that I am in now, but cannot help me at all with my homework, proves that you either use your knowledge, or you lose it. If we show our kids what it means to act against a modern mass killing and stand up for people who are suffering, instead of just telling them about genocides of the past, they will learn a lesson that will last forever.