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How did I find out about this writing contest?

-Heard about it through my Sophomore Humanities class.

Hope in Times of Darkness

 The horrific genocide of the Holocaust must never happen again. The pain it caused so many people is something no one should ever have to experience. However, genocides like the Holocaust are still happening today. Although they may not be of such a large-scale, they still cause unimaginable pain to the people who are targeted as well as to their friends and families. What we can do to help these people is to offer them hope.

 During the Holocaust, brief sparks of hope occurred for the captives. These bright flames came in the form of resistance movements such as The White Rose Society and the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The fact that people were fighting for them must have eased some of the sense of abandonment they were experiencing, but they still felt lost and alone. It is safe to assume this is how the people involved in current genocides feel. Yet we can do something. We can be the spark of hope these people need to make it through (www.ushmm.org).

 Today, an ethnic “cleansing” continues in Darfur, a region of Western Sudan. Khartoum declared a “holy war” on the Nuba people because they were resisting Islamization and did not believe in racial supremacy. Rebel areas are being depopulated; men, women, and children are being killed every day, and the Nuba people have been dehumanized by being referred to as “black plastic bags” and “trash.” They have been kicked out of their homes and forced to live in caves, hiding from the Sudan Armed Forces as they try to flee to safe areas such as Maban in South Sudan. So far there have been a reported 400,000 dead due to malnutrition, disease, and direct attacks, and over 3 million Nuba people have been forced from their homes (www.darfuraustralia.org).

 These people are the perfect example of why we need to do something about genocides and hatred. Even teenagers can do something to prevent these situations from reoccurring. The foundation of genocides and hatred is in the way people view others. The fact that teenagers still have time to form their opinions of others is hugely beneficial. If they come to realize no one deserves to be treated differently than others, they can build on that belief as they grow, cementing it into a solid way of thinking by the time they become adults. Once we come to the realization that no one deserves to be treated as less than human (like the Jews were treated during the Holocaust or the Nuba people are being treated today), then it is our duty to spread that knowledge and belief to other people, therefore, taking out the very source of genocides: people’s hatred.

 However, just helping to prevent future genocides is not enough. We also need to be concerned with the genocides happening today. There are so many ways in which we can help, but simply raising awareness of the cruelty in the world is the most important action we can take. When we let others know what is happening, there is more support for the people being affected. There are several places where we can raise awareness, but a big one is at high schools. Simply putting up posters or talking in class about world issues helps to raise awareness. Another way to help support people in faraway places who face hatred and oppression is to collect money to donate to groups that are actively fighting in those places. For instance, organizations such as the Save Darfur Coalition and the Genocide Intervention Network are helping to fight against the genocide in Darfur, and we can help them by sending money to fund their cause.

 Hatred is a horrible emotion. It leads to murder, revenge, and genocide, yet hatred is something we can actively try to overcome. First, we can prevent people from growing up with hatred in their hearts by helping to spread messages of goodness and love. Second, we can help to raise awareness regarding acts of genocide and hatred that are happening in the world today by talking about world circumstances and what we can do to help. Last, we can send money to help fund organizations that are actively helping to take a stand against genocides in the world. Together, we can help make a change for the better.

Sources:

* "The Basic Facts about Darfur." *The Basic Facts about Darfur*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2013.
* "Holocaust History." *Introduction to the Holocaust*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2013.
* http://www.ushmm.org/education/foreducators/resource/pdf/resistance.pdf