“Resistance to Genocide”

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8th Grade

I heard about this contest from my English teacher, Mrs. Areta, she gave us the contest sheet and encouraged us to participate.

“Long live our sacred Germany,” Colonel Claus Von Stauffenberg said right before he was shot by German soldiers. Colonel Stauffenberg organized a plot to assassinate Hitler which later failed. When he realized Hitler would ruin Europe, he made a choice to step up and fight for what was right. He knew that if his plan did not work, Hitler would continue to place innocent people in danger of losing their lives. He also knew that no one would have the courage to stop Hitler. The Holocaust, which was brought on by Adolf Hitler’s desire to purify the German race, eliminated six million Jews and others who were living in Germany and other parts of Europe between 1933 and 1945. This was definitely an act of hatred directed at a group of people whose only fault was being deemed “racially inferior.” The attempted bombing on the 2011 Martin Luther King Day parade in Spokane, Washington, was also an act targeting people celebrating the ideals of a man who worked all his life to create equality among the races. Both acts portray racist beliefs held by those who claim that the white race is the supreme race. Because of the many events including and similar to the Holocaust, several organizations were created to protect against biased attacks. The violent outbreaks of racial discrimination need to stop.

As a young teenager, I would like to organize a weekly reading of quotes by people like Martin Luther King Jr., Abraham Lincoln, and others whom we know and admire who took a stand and helped combat racial prejudice. Since at my school I am in leadership class, we would weekly present the school with quotes such as, “I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at a table of brotherhood,” said by Martin Luther King Jr. in his famous “I Have a Dream” speech. To get my fellow students involved, I would kindly ask them to look up a quote each week and place it under the picture of the person who said it, which we could format into a poster and keep them up throughout the school all week long. Also, to get students motivated I would give a prize to the person who took the time to find a quote. Since this is my idea, I would be happy to donate the prizes. Some of the prizes could be gift cards to iTunes or Coldstone worth five dollars a card.

Another idea I would like to encourage is getting my friends to speak up when others make comments that are racist or rude. The hope is that my friends will encourage other people to do the same. For example, if someone is making fun of another person regarding their clothes, I would like people to kindly point out a different and more positive idea by saying, “maybe they cannot afford new clothes at the moment,” protecting the hurt person and stepping up. By just saying one little sentence, we would be helping the person and fighting for what is right. When I found out that there were fifteen recorded assassination attempts aimed at Hitler, I thought to myself, ‘wow, people actually knew what was right and fought for it.’ Most of the people in Germany were following orders blindly and others were afraid of speaking up against the genocide that was going on. Unfortunately the fifteen attempts to murder Hitler failed because they were not powerful enough and their plans had to be kept secret. I believe that you cannot fight a wild fire with one bucket of water.

Being in middle school, I realize the things we learn in school shape our knowledge and opinions on what is important in life. If schools do not encourage the right values, students will not take action to right the wrongs. Valkyrie, the movie, is about a plot to assassinate Hitler. It inspired me to set an example for other people by showing them to never give up and fight for what they believe in. Because of the Martin Luther King Day parade attempted bombing, more people are aware of the hatred towards different races that is in our own community today. In order to not allow fear to stop people from participating in the parade, the city of Spokane placed more police throughout the route. Since then, more people have participated in the parade to show support for the cause of erasing racial discrimination. By doing so, they set a great example towards young people to come forward and not let fear stop them from standing up for what is right. If the people in Germany who opposed Hitler’s policies would have united to defeat him, perhaps fewer Jews would have died.

Martin Luther King Jr. did not die in vain, neither did Colonel Stauffenberg. The genocide that occurred during the Holocaust will never be forgotten. Change happens when one individual gets others to help in righting a wrong and others join the same fight. Set an example for what is right and start a better future.