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Holocaust Essay

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*“No one can make you feel inferior without your consent.” –Eleanor Roosevelt.*

This quote represents the strength I found after I was bullied. In second grade a new girl named Anna came to our school; she tried to tag along with all of the kids that fit her definition of popular, I was not one of them. She started to bully me little by little. At first she started by saying that I was really annoying, then she would roll her eyes and flip her hair. It felt bad when she said that but I just let it go. She would invite me to sit next to her at lunch and then she would take my cookies when I wasn't looking and then say that what I was eating was gross and that I was gross. When she said that I would wonder why she was taking my food if it was gross, but never pointed that out. Gradually, it became more hurtful.

One time we were playing tetherball against each other and she started hitting the ball really hard and when she won she jumped up and down and said that I “sucked at tether ball”. I went off to get a drink of water. While I was drinking, someone started pinching and poking me from behind. I turned around and there stood Anna. “Please stop that,” I asked. She rolled her eyes. “Ada, has anyone ever told you that you are way too nice? You are a goody-good and it's really annoying. You should be more like me.” She walked away. “Why are you so mean?” I asked. She stopped in her tracks and turned around and walked over to me. My heart started thumping. “ Because you are so nice.” While saying that, she started shaking me really hard and then pushed me lightly before she walked away. I stood there confused and wondering where all my friends were and why they weren't here standing up for me and supporting me while pools of tears started

to form in my eyes. Then a few girls in my class walked up and gave me hugs and comforted me.

After the tetherball incident, whenever they saw Anna trying to pick on me they would come over and stand up for me. I gradually became a bad target for Anna because whenever she bullied me the kids whose attention she was trying to get were the ones who were telling her to stop and getting her in trouble. I also didn't react when she said things that were supposed to make me sad or hurt.

I have learned from the study of the Holocaust that bystanders have the power to prevent genocide from happening. During the Holocaust, one half of one percent of non-Jews resisted against the Nazis. What if more had conquered their fears and stood up for what is right? How much smaller would the amount of people who were murdered be? We will never know.

Because I have been a bystander and a victim, I know how difficult it is to find the courage to confront a bully. Eleanor Roosevelt's quote, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent" also applies to the Holocaust because when the Jews were in the concentration camps they had to stay strong and not give in to bullying or lose hope. Once they lost all of their hope, they didn't have the will to go on. I think in the Holocaust, the reason why most people didn't resist was because they were afraid of being killed or sentenced to prison. During the study of the Holocaust I learned about the spectrum of hatred and how something as big as genocide starts off with something as small as prejudice, hating or disliking someone for something such as their religion or race.

It is frightening to think that small bullying can lead up to genocide. During the study of the Holocaust I had one question: how did the Germans give in to Hitler's trap so quickly? I made an interesting discovery while talking to a teacher. The teacher I was talking to said that one time she heard a kid in her class say that they didn't want to play with one kid because that kid was the "problem kid." The teacher realized that the *students in her class were observing the way she treated one kid. She was always encouraging that kid to behave and participate so the only thing that the other students saw in that kid was that they were the one who held back the whole class. The teacher said that it was so interesting to see how her actions and words had created the other children to dislike that one child even though she didn't mean for it to happen.*

This relates to the Holocaust because when Hitler came into power he not only influenced the adults but also the children. He started youth organizations where children bullied the Jews. Children look up to their parents as their role models so if all of the non-Jewish parents were telling their kids that Jews caused problems most of the children would believe them.

It makes me shiver when I think about how small bullying can lead up to *genocide. I was a victim of small bullying. Could that really have lead up to genocide?* Everyday kids are bullied. Some kids are excluded, some punched, and some are damaged by words. How could all of these minor scenarios lead up to genocide? It starts off with stereotyping creating a belief about someone that moves on to scapegoating, blaming someone for their race or religion. Prejudice, calling people names and telling mean jokes about people. Then it continues on with racial discrimination, ganging-up,

anti-semitism, and finally genocide. The deliberate murder of an entire racial, religious or ethnic group.

When you are a bystander you can speak out to stop bullying from growing into genocide. During the Holocaust the bystanders had the power to stop it from happening but the only thing that they didn't have was the courage to stop it. All that they saw was the consequence that they would receive if they got caught. Hitler had the power to influence people by offering them a dream to make a better world. He gave them people to blame for the state that their country was in. When he blamed the Jews he put them in concentration camps where only the strong survived. The ones who survived were the ones who never gave up hope; they were the ones who knew that no matter how bad it got it would end. As a student of the Holocaust I have learned about genocide and the power of hate, but most importantly I have learned about the power of hope.