

I am a sophomore girl at Henry M. Jackson High School and life is getting harder. To elaborate, I'm actually fifteen and blonde, so I must be dumb. I'm taller than most females and I'm slender, so I'm obviously a freak with an eating disorder. Also, I enjoy school and hanging with the guys, so of course I'm a nerdy slut. Actually, I don't believe I am any of those descriptions. Those are just a few degrading labels I was given by my fellow "peers" at Jackson. Surprisingly, Jackson High School is directly in the suburbs of Mill Creek, Washington. Even though it's not located somewhere like the Bronx, sexual, racial, religious and physical bullying occurs every day. Truthfully, almost every one of us who attends Jackson has been both, a victim of bullying and the bully at one time or another. The name calling and teasing is just one example of bullying. The book Night, by Elie Wiesel, shows the most severe side of dehumanization. Night is a heartbreaking novel about the Holocaust, which is a traumatizing event in history where millions of people, primarily Jews, were tortured and killed because they didn't qualify as the ideal individual. This book made me more aware of the dehumanization that takes place daily at Jackson High School, Which I unwarily even play a part.

Wiesel was a survivor of the Holocaust who bravely described the true terror and violence that took place in concentration camps. It seems as if there are no words to describe the hell that the innocent prisoners went through during the time they spent in the camps, but in the book Night, Wiesel explains the severe dehumanizing acts that took place. The Jews and other prisoners were not only stripped from their family, clothes and health but from their identity as well. For example, the prisoners were tormented so severely that they began to lose faith in their religion, "why should I sanctify his name? The almighty, the eternal and terrible master of the universe chose to be silent. What was there to thank him for?" (Wiesel 33) The prisoners were

also starved and beaten to the point that they preferred death over the so called life they were living, "The idea of dying, of ceasing to be, began to fascinate me. To no longer exist. To no longer feel anything, neither fatigue nor cold, nothing" (Wiesel 86), this was only one of the times that Wiesel thought of taking his own life in the book. Both these sections showed me how much religion can impact a person and that I should always respect people's choice in faith. Page 86 also illustrates to me that constant teasing can lead to suicide thoughts and that I should always be aware on how I treat others. On the other hand, Wiesel's loss of hope and faith seems reasonable after learning of the horrid abuse, both physically and verbally, that the prisoners went through. For the "lucky" ones that weren't chosen to be cremated during the selection processes, endured repeated physical abuse and were dehumanized to practically nothing. They were given numbers in replace of their names and they were even naked and hairless in freezing weather and then forced to sleep in extremely over crowded barracks (Wiesel 41, 42). After living in these humiliating conditions the prisoners were also physically and even sexually abused on top of it, "Then as if waking from a deep sleep, he slapped my father with such force that he fell down and crawled back to his place on all fours." (Wiesel 39) Sadly, the prisoners weren't always the victims; in many cases they even assaulted each other in the camps. Learning of all the suffering and torture the prisoners of the Holocaust went through made me sick to my stomach. I can't understand how human beings do this to each other, or why. The Holocaust is mind- boggling, and went down in history so we would learn from it and never make the same terrible mistakes.

Sadly, dehumanization still occurs daily. I witness bullying between students at Jackson High School regularly, even though the acts aren't as drastic as the mass murders in the Holocaust, the continuous belittling eventually leads some students to suicide. The types of

bullying at my school include both physical and verbal abuse and they can be over numerous topics including religion, race, sexuality and hobbies. It seems as if we are still discriminating one another about practically anything that we see as different or unusual. I believe the bullying at my school takes place to gain power and weaken the fellow classmates around them.

Frequently, I see degrading names being shouted or the ever so famous death glare as the more common types of bullying in the halls at Jackson. However, it's becoming even harder to escape the tormenting due to cyber bullying. Not only are students being bullied during school, but the teasing now even follows them home. Cell phones, Facebooks, and blogging sites have empowered Jackson's bullies even more. They've allowed them to hide behind their phones and computer screens, and then send threatening text or post malicious comments towards innocent classmates. After constant harassment, many of our students try to change who they truly are to fit in and become accepted, ruining the diversity among JHS. Almost every day I see this senior girl and her followers strut down the hall after third period, she will purposely bump into a girl in my grade and then spit out humiliating comments such as, "watch it fatty." Mortified, the girl puts her head down and scurries off. I've seen the defeated look on her face far too many times, and I want so badly to stand up to the snobby senior. Yet I never have. I've always been too scared and have kept silent. This is the case for many students at my school as well, many of us are too worried to speak up to the bully so we either silently watch or even laugh with encouragement.

However, after becoming a student of the Holocaust the way I perceive people and respond to uniqueness has changed completely. Personally, I have always been strong enough to brush off the harsh slurs I've received over the years. Thus, I never categorized myself as a true victim of bullying, and until reading the book Night I didn't think I was a bully either. Night has

taught me that the people who witness the bullying and don't do anything are just as guilty as the bully himself. Never have I put a ton of effort in trying to stop a bully and in that case I am just as guilty for keeping silent. From the eyes of the victim the silent or giggling bystanders probably look equally cruel. Just as Martin Luther King Jr. said, "In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends." I've learned that I am capable in putting an end to dehumanization and changing the lives of victims who endure the harassment. Also, I've become more accepting of people's differences and realized the diversity at Jackson is what really makes it beautiful. Everyone should be able to express their true identity without fear, because there is no ideal person in life. We should all be treated as equals, nothing should make others more superior over one another.

After reading Night, my eyes were opened to spot the beauty within an individual. Night has also made clear to me that I too have been a bully. With dehumanization as severe as the Holocaust reoccurring in places like Africa and Egypt, we as a whole human race need to put an end to all bullying and eventually achieve world peace. I truly believe this can be achieved in a chain reaction with one step at a time, so I will go first. I'm going to end my silence and stand up to the senior snob and any other bullying I come across at Jackson High School.