



KATE KLIKA

is a seventh grader at Miller South School for the Visual and Performing Arts in Akron. She loves musical theater and enjoys performing at school and Weathervane Community Playhouse. She loves to read and enjoys Shakespeare and Edgar Allen Poe. She would love to have a career in musical theater and perform on Broadway.

When I went to the National Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C., I wasn't sure what to expect. What I saw there was definitely not anything I could have come up with on my own. What I heard and saw was a horror story, like an awful book or movie, but this wasn't fiction. Villages, massacred. Children, slaughtered. A culture and faith, all but destroyed. This is what I found there. Propaganda, the hate that was drilled into exploitable minds. The concentration camps and gas chambers, places you were sent to die. People were forced to dig their own graves. Families were ripped apart, never to see each other again. Six million Jewish people and five to six million non-Jews, including racially undesirables such as Gypsies, Ukrainians, Poles, Jehovah's Witnesses, homosexuals, political enemies, handicapped and disabled, and prisoners of war were eradicated.

When I was there, I felt a mix of emotions. I felt angry, sad, disturbed, horrified, and depressed. I was so confused. How could people let this happen? There had to have been signs. Yet, nobody stopped it. Nobody spoke up, and the result was at least eleven million dead. I found it sickly ironic that when Adolf Hitler was loudly spewing his twisted views of the world, nobody else could manage to open their mouths. This dark period of history is most commonly known as the Holocaust, but I started to think of it as the Problem with Being Silent.

It reminds me of a famous quote from Pastor Martin Niemöller, "First they came for the Socialists and I did not speak out because I was not a Socialist. Then they came for the Trade Unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a Trade Unionist. Then they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew. Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak for me." It ironically speaks for itself.

People can definitely learn multiple lessons from the Holocaust, but I think one of the most valuable is to not stay silent. It doesn't matter if it's genocide or name-calling. You have to do what is right and speak out, or the Holocaust can and will happen again.