

2017 Elie Wiesel Competition

3rd Place Senior Essay

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Hitler's Advantage: A Somewhat Motivational Essay on Responsibility

Human capacity for emotion has dumbfounded scientist, sociologists, and psychologists for ages. The question of how Hitler can kill tens of millions of people and return home to spoil his dog Blondi with raw meat and her own is the same as to how murderers can wash the blood off their hands to tuck their children in at night ("Infamous: Hitler's Dogs"). But in the face of adversity, some of our species turn out to possess the necessary constitution to overcome the obstacles.

The bystander effect occurs when the presence of other people discourages a person from intervening in or even reporting a crime. Someone may feel that another onlooker should take the lead or be concerned with how much responsibility will be placed on their shoulders. Whatever the circumstances may be, someone must take action to resolve the situation. In Hanns' case, he quickly realized there were no bystanders to rescue him from the clutches of the Nazis. He took it upon himself to run from the officers who captured him, attempt to eave Germany (albeit unsuccessfully) , and muster the bravery to trust the SS soldier who gave him his passport. Hanns' bravery has forced me to remember that during a lot of my life, I will be the only one who has my own back. Growing older has opened my eyes to how unlikely it is for others o advocate for you. Accepting that fact is the first step towards surviving the harsh jungle of our world.

A few days after watching Hanns' film for the first time, I went to Washington, D.C. for a family vacation. During my time in the city, I saw many homeless people. I had seen homelessness before, but it had never struck me with as much force as it did then. Every time I passed someone on the street shivering in the cold, I wondered if they had an escape from their situation. It was then that I noticed how Hanns' message corresponded with my desire to do something for people who don't have a way to improve their life. Personal responsibility is not always recognizing that you must fend for yourself; it is sometimes using your position to help others who don't have the same opportunities. Passing people who could use your aid and thinking "someone else can deal with it" is doing a great injustice to both them and yourself. In this world full of connections, it is far easier to donate money or time to a charity of your choice than it was for Hanns to stand up to the Nazis.

Hitler came to power during an era of nervous government officials, scared to repeat World War I and eager to find a scapegoat for economic and political problems. The Jews were an easy group to target, and the world, still physically and emotionally scarred from the war only years earlier, found it quite easy to cast a blind eye on the injustices occurring in Eastern Europe. It was no wonder Hitler gained power quickly; the people around him didn't want to be the senseless ones to resist such a ruthless ruler. Although Hitler is long gone, many in this day and age are just as apathetic as government officials and citizens were during World War II. Hanns' story is an important example of how proactivity can affect your life. His actions saved his and his parents' lives, and if he hadn't thought

quickly to jump off that Nazi truck, he would have been dead before he could even think about rescuing his parents. It is uncommon for there to be a single dictator who controls as much as Hitler did in the world today; instead there are groups who find it easier to conquer with the strength of many. These people still know, however, that there are a few people willing to stand up to such power. Our generation must be the one to begin realizing that we will not get what we want without trying. It won't be easy – there are millions of millennials in the US and billions around the globe, and the world isn't really making room for us. We have been branded as narcissistic, lazy, unpatriotic, and constantly glued to our tech. While those descriptors may apply to some people, it is unlikely our whole generation is that shallow and ignorant. Although these stereotypes are untrue, they won't change until we try to prove them wrong. We must work hard, try to put down our fascinating phones, and fight for what we want. How can we expect a better world if we pin all of the responsibility on someone else?

Works Cited

"Infamous: Hitler's Dogs." Dogs for Defense. WordPress. N.d. Web. 23 January 2017.
<http://dfdk9.wordpress.com/aboutdfdk9/>