

2017 Elie Wiesel Competition

Honorable Mention Senior Poetry

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Oscar Smith High School, Marianne McMillin

Eyes, Fallen and Empty

A father –

Who treasured his only child

Watched as his pale, always-ill son

Was marched, by barrel of a gun

Towards the cries and smoking pit

His eyes fell, and were empty

A Singer –

Who was youthful and just married

With a soul softer than moonlight

Screamed as her love hung from gallows

For defending himself from death

Her eyes fell, and were empty

A stripling—

Who put family before all

Forced labor beside his *Sabba*

Saw old hands turn to gnarled roots

And wept when he passed beside him

His eyes fell, and were empty

A preacher—

Who celebrated God with love

Held a dying child in his arms

Soon, naught but a once-warm body

That day, he learned God was long dead

His eyes fell, and were empty

A daughter—

Who loved to play and dance, carefree

Hidden in a church, not her own

Pretending to be a Christian

To escape the horror of home

Her eyes fell, and were empty

A blindman—

Who cherished the beauty of sound

Certain to be a killed any day

Wished to hear laughter on last time

His last hours were drowning sorrow

His eyes fell, and were empty

A soldier—

Who was just trying to survive
Forced to execute pleading lives
Shot more than he could remember
Then pulled his trigger one last time
His eyes fell, and were empty

A fighter—

Who spoke against the injustice
The flame inside her burned brightly
Her passion muzzled, buried
Turned to dull bones in a mass grave
Her eyes fell, and were empty

A family—

Who lived on top of a book store
Disappeared to a secret room
Five people in a space for two
Dread as the house is searched again
Their eyes fell, and were empty

A genocide—

Death thrived on every inch of earth
Power lust gripped the hearts of men
Hate used the world as a plaything
Eleven million snuffed out
Too many eyes fell, and were empty

It is happening once more.

Hatred continues to snake through the
population, a poison in humanity's
bloodstream.

The seeds of a returning genocide have already
sprouted, hate and prejudice festering
in positions of authority, waiting to
choke life from the flowering garden of
unique, beautiful people below.

We must choke the weed before it chokes
humanity.

If we perceive stories of the Holocaust as
nothing more than stories, we can
never learn from them. They're not
stories, but tragic events. It is why we
fight now instead of standing idly by.

The lives of Elie Wiesel and Hanns Loewenbach show us that even if the oppression of others doesn't affect us, we can and should stop fascism where it stands.

Because Muslims are being forced to register themselves, reduced to nothing more than a number.

Because black lives are being shot in our streets and they are blamed, called "thugs."

Because families are being ripped apart by deportation bills, orphaning children.

Because women are being denied the right to their body, to be human.

Because the new Vice President would throw me in conversion camp before regarding me as a human being.

Because the President in office promised lies and won by screeching so loud you were forced to hear the spewing ugly.

Because anyone who took a history class should have long-ago recognized the pattern arising America.

Because eleven million is a number too large to even begin comprehending.

Because we must take the events of the past and *do something about the world*.

Because if not, then every death, every pair of eyes fallen and turned empty is on the hands of those who did nothing to stop it.

Because we refuse to watch idly any longer.