

The Recurring Nightmare of Genocide

At age twenty-five, most young adults experience the best periods of their life, enjoying being young and free, playful yet mature, blissful and hopeful toward the future. At age twenty-five, Max Krautler experienced arguably the cruelest conditions a group of people have faced in centuries. In an interview conducted by the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust, Krautler recounts horrific events that present the loss and sacrifice of others that led to his ultimate luck of survival. During his time in the Death March, Krautler recalls “[My friend] was helping me, and on the end, he got sick, and I was helping him to walk. And I couldn’t walk so fast because he was sick. I go slowly, and the Germans told me to let him, and I have to go without him. I left him, and they shot him,” (11, Krautler). Because of selflessness and the utter kindness of another man in his last moments, Krautler survived to tell his story. However, with becoming the sole survivor of a genocide, that comes with a sense of guilt and doubt; a lingering question: ‘why me?’ that weakens his trust in humanity.

At the end of the interview, when questioned what people should understand from the Holocaust, Krautler plainly states “People don’t -- can’t understand that this could happen, things, and some people even don’t believe that it happened,” (19). The interviewer continues by asking what we can learn from the Holocaust; to which Krautler explains “I don’t think [one] can learn something. You have to practically went through the things that you learn,” (19). Although I started to look at this as a cynical view, I began to realize this is the view of a victim who has lost faith in humanity. Even with experiencing the kindness and selflessness of others during his time in the various concentration camps, the genocide he went through – including the willing tolerance from bystanders was enough to put a void in his meaning of humanity.

The trauma and pure terror of the Holocaust stripped so many victims, similar to Max Krautler, of their hope for a better future. And with his loss in faith, they are correct. In modern day there is a current genocide happening right in front of the world: the Chinese government is slaughtering Uyghurs and placing them inside the same concentration camps as a century before, during Krautler’s youth. Not only is the Chinese government enslaving this group of people, but they are sterilizing and murdering millions of Uyghurs. Just as Krautler predicted, the entire world and its citizens are performing willing tolerance of yet another genocide. Krautler simply notes, “It just depends how they teach in the school, how they get education and things in schools,” (19). Without action and education of all future generations, nothing will change, and these massacres will continue to come and go as normal for all our future generations.