

January 6, 2016

Dear Anne Frank,

The moment your book started to make a difference to me began with a dream resonating with terror. Maybe it was not as much as you faced, but it was still significantly more than anyone should ever have to face in reality. *In the dream, I was standing in a line. When I came to the head, a hand came from behind. It delivered a hard blow causing me to stumble as I entered a dark room. A click. A whirr. I felt my shoulders slump, and my eyes felt heavy. No! I thought. What did I ever do to deserve this? All alone in a gas chamber, extinguished forever ...* I jerked awake, breathing wildly, still terrified ... but very safe. That was the moment it clicked for me, when I realized that no other book that I have read or will ever read would ever hold such a special place in my heart or my mind. I realized that the world has not learned yet, because people are still harassed for the very traits that make them unique, special. Evil monsters still brutally murder innocent civilians, for power and riches. And humanity will never learn. You are right. World peace is impossible, and we can only strive to get as close to it as possible. I will never truly comprehend what you went through, but at least I can understand the essence of your dilemma.

After reading your book, I see stark parallels between your world and mine. Remember the star you used to wear? Certain American political figures claim that all Muslims should carry an ID card, marking innocent people as criminals that they aren't and never will be. Remember going into hiding? That's the only thing that will come of these ID cards. It's a slippery slope. One moment, everyone is getting along beautifully, and the next, everyone is eyeing one another with distrust, suspicion and even malice. I have been to Dachau, almost felt the prisoners' cry of pain, erupting from the blood-soaked ground. Is this what lies ahead for us? The world must read your diary, because you brought the awful truth into light. Humans could come together and end so much suffering, if only they knew how much there truly was. If only they could peep out of the prison of belief they have built for themselves, blind bias by blind bias. With your help, I escaped from my prison, but now I wonder if someone else will build another one, if not for me, then for another unsuspecting person.

Your book, without using the same boring old mantra, taught me that no two people are alike. I knew the theory: don't hate people because they're different. That was easy for me, being rather independent. I didn't have the opportunity to hate anyone. However, it never stuck, mainly because "We are all different" is an overly used catchphrase. Teachers repeat it, counselors repeat it, even guest speakers repeat it. We are so bombarded with this cliché, in the same format each time, that we tune it out whenever we hear those four words. You showed me what the saying truly meant. You wrote about the many decisions you made that I would not have made in your shoes, from writing in pen (as opposed to pencil) to kissing Peter (as opposed to having a garden variety friendship). Also, each one of your fellow prisoners is different. They are cheerful and depressed, shy and outspoken, serious and fun. I think it's wonderful to think that there are so many of us, yet none of us is exactly the same.

The only way for us, as a united human race, to stop violence seems simple: peace. Yet you say it's impossible. Remembering my dream, I must agree. I used to think that in half a century or so, it would somehow get better, the bleeding staunched, the killing stopped. You taught me that one problem still stands in our way. The beautiful differences that you wrote about, the ones that keep our lovely blue planet turning, there are just too many of them, too many conflicting ones. Plus, some differences aren't so beautiful. The Nazis' desire to torture, to lie, to kill, that is all unique, yet none of these are good traits to possess as a human being. Unfortunately, all of them are present in every generation, acting as a barrier between the world and peace, the best, the only solution to all of our problems.

unique, yet none of these are good traits to possess as a human being. Unfortunately, all of them are present in every generation, acting as a barrier between the world and peace, the best, the only solution to all of our problems.

Your dilemma was one created by xenophobia. Do you think we have changed? Not a single bit, because there will always be too many idiots, criminals and madmen. Too many to restrain. Too determined to pacify. I am sorry that your story was not merely a nightmare, that you did not wake up in your room, safe and sound.

That the terrifying reality – was reality. I am sorry your life was cut short, so suddenly, so brutally, when you were so full of talent and promise. And I am even sorrier to tell you that thousands of innocent people are still slain each day. The world needs to lend a hand, but it is too ignorant to do so. So because of your book, I pledge to speak for those who have no voice. Better yet, I pledge to see for those who are blind, for once they see, no human shall be voiceless.

Yours truly,

En-Hua C. Holtz

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