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Commemorating International Holocaust Remembrance Day

#NeverForget is a hashtag often used in today's popular culture. It is one that is applicable to so many things, but especially to International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Celebrated on January 27, the day Auschwitz was freed by Soviet forces in 1945, International Holocaust Remembrance Day is a time for people to reflect upon, remember, and learn about the experiences of the victims and survivors of the Holocaust. The day draws attention to this important part of history and asks us to be reminded of the lasting effects of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was the genocide of European Jews. It occurred between 1941 and 1945, when Nazi Germany and Nazi-German collaborators murdered approximately six million Jews across Europe. The Holocaust resulted in millions of futures lost and lives forever impacted by an unfathomable and unrestrained hatred and intolerance of differences.It is said that if you hold your breath for one minute for each victim of the Holocaust, you'd be holding your breath for 11.5 years.

Holocaust stories fill history books, biographies and even today's fiction books and movies. But for me, the Holocaust and International Holocaust Remembrance Day is quite personal. My own family was impacted by the Holocaust as both of my maternal grandparents were Holocaust survivors, and my maternal grandmother was imprisoned in Auschwitz. She was one of the lucky ones to have survived. My grandfather faught for the Czech resistance army. They met as the war was ending, after Auschwitz was liberated and after both had suffered immeasurable losses in the concentratoin camps. They then fled Europe and settled in South America to live a life free of hate and the kind of intolerance that brought about the Holocaust.

In remembering the atrocities of the Holocaust, and stories like my family's, we are called to remember how the lives of so many were lost and to stand together against hatred, antisemitism and intolerance. Ian Kershaw stated "the road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference. "By this, Kershaw meant that the progression of such deeply held antisemitic beliefs leading up to Auschwitz and the imprisonment and death of so many was motivated by prejudice against Jewish people, but that it took place in a setting where the surrounding population was wholly indifferent to what was happening.

> "The road to Auschwitz was built by hate, but paved with indifference."
>
> - Ian Kershaw

One of the most discussed Jewish victims of the Holocaust who gained fame posthumously with the publication of The Diary of a Young Girl in which she documents her life in hiding from 1942 to 1944.

Today, we live in a world where hate has a platform to spread. We cannot be indifferent. We must pass along the history of the Holocaust to future generations so that history does not repeat itself and so we can keep the promise of #NeverForget. We must speak out against antisemitism and all bigotry and intolerance. It is our common responsibility to remember and to be and do better for the future.