

I Will Honour Victims Of The Holocaust By Helping Refugees

My personal connection to the Holocaust is what motivates my ongoing involvement with refugee causes today.

When I was a child in the 1970s, we used to visit my Great Uncle Sam and Auntie Goldie at their little house in Toronto's Kensington Market. They seemed very old and Sam seemed very sad. I didn't know why then, but now I understand that Sam looked the way you would probably look if someone put your wife and kids into an oven and turned on the gas.

They were Polish concentration camp survivors whose, first spouses and children were killed in the holocaust. They met after the war, married and came to Toronto.

We would drink tea and eat cookies, while my parents made conversation, and I stared at the wall full of framed black-and-white photographs of all the people in our family who had died at the hands of the Nazis.



Visitors look at pictures of Jews killed in the Holocaust during a visit to the Hall of Names at Yad Vashem's Holocaust History Museum in Jerusalem on April 18, 2012.

Honestly, it didn't have much of an impact at the time. It was only after I grew up, had a child of my own and started paying attention to the global refugee crisis that I started thinking a lot about the Holocaust; about the children (the mass killings of children is the hardest part to stomach,) about how badly the world failed the refugees and about what "never again" really means.

My father was born in 1929 to parents who immigrated to Canada from Poland in the 1920s. The rest of their families remained in Europe; by the time they realized what was happening, it was too late. Most of the world had shut its doors. So, they died. All of them.

Consider the 900 Jewish refugees aboard the MS St. Louis who, in 1939, were denied entry to Cuba, the United States, and Canada before being sent back to Europe, where an estimated quarter of them died in death camps.

Consider Adolph Eichmann, a Nazi SS lieutenant colonel, offering one million Jews to the British in exchange for 10,000 Allied trucks, to which Lord Moyne, British Deputy Minister of State, responded, "What would I do with one million Jews? Where would I put them?"

The best way to honour these dates is to do something to help those who are displaced around the world right now

Consider the unidentified Canadian immigration agent who, when asked in 1939 how many Jews would be allowed in Canada after the war, replied, "None is too many."

While I'm not entirely on board with comparing current crises with the Holocaust, my personal connection to this is what motivates my involvement with refugee causes today. "Never again" requires that we never turn our backs again. It means going beyond liking things on Facebook, beyond "thoughts and prayers," to opening our doors to let people into our houses.

I have "Tzedakah" — the Hebrew word for "righteousness," but which is commonly used to mean "charity" — tattooed on my left forearm, to remind me.

It's hard to be ungenerous when you permanently ink this word on your body.

April 12, 2018 is the 27 of Nisan on the Jewish calendar, observed as Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day, by many around the world. It also falls in the middle of Refugee Rights Month in Toronto. The best way to honour these dates is to do something to help those who are displaced around the world right now, including, but not limited to Syrians, Africans and the Rohingya.



JENS SCHLUETER VIA GETTY IMAGES

Syrian refugees go through the entrance to the Buchenwald concentration camp memorial to commemorate victims of the Holocaust on January 26, 2018 near Weimar, Germany.

The refugee crisis isn't always front and centre like it was a couple of years ago, but it's far from over, as there are 22.5 million refugees in the world. The seeming insurmountability of this might be the cause of some of the increasing apathy.

But it might help to understand that each of those 22.5 million people is more than a simple statistic, and that you can make a huge difference in one life, two, or even dozens of lives. It will also change your own life. Sponsoring of a family of refugees last year (with another one pending arrival) is the most rewarding thing

I have ever done, besides raising my daughter.

You don't have to be Jewish to honour the people who lost their lives in the Holocaust by helping others. You just have to be human.

Source: https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/elizabeth-bromstein/holocaust-refugee-remembrance_a_23408992/

[Disclaimer]