



DO NOT STAND IDLY BY

SAVE
DARFUR

Albert Einstein once said, "The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing." Then there was Edmund Burke, who believed that "All that is necessary for evil to succeed is that good men do nothing." And in the infamous words of Benjamin Franklin, "There are no gains without pains." These great men believed in two things: the power of action, and the power of the individual. All accomplished incredible deeds in their lifetimes not through lofty political positions, or by using mass amounts of money to buy them opportunities. These men relied on intellect, curiosity, and a stirring desire to take action.

Now let's jump ahead to a matter of great importance, and the reason why we stand here tonight. Darfur. You may know the place. You can imagine a hot desert, seemingly empty aside from the sparse villages that dot the landscape. There reside a humble sort of people. Men, women, and children live off of the land, and whatever they have, but it is not much. They lack food, water, and vaccinations for commonly-cured diseases, now deadly to them. These innocent people do not even have proper shelter, but this is not the tragedy we wish to address. Barely hanging on with what they have, these Darfurians must also compete with their own government.

The Sudanese government, notorious for its radical militaristic ruling methods, seeks to essentially exterminate its non-Arab citizens for religious and political reasons. Since 2003, the Sudanese government has paid off a group of killers called the Janjaweed, to eliminate the Darfurians. These men are paid to ride into villages on horseback with provided guns, to rape, murder, pillage, and finally burn the villages to the ground, so that there is no hope of survival. One-by-one they pick off villages, so that the population has dwindled, while terror escalates. All of this, for what?

Many people have asked themselves that very question. Clearly the government has an envisioned outcome to this genocide, but how could it possibly be worth the senseless murder of thousands? And from the shock and empathy of those people sprang up groups like the Jewish World Watch, an organization whose sole purpose is to end genocide, current and future. Did you HEAR that? Shock and empathy motivated these people to great mitzvot. It did not take a politically-shrewd President Barack Obama, or a money-making-machine like Bill Gates to pull together such an influential group. It took an ordinary group of people who simply recognized injustice and could not stand for it.

Now lets come back to PJTC, a long long way from Darfur. Now we get to tell you our own call to action. Two years ago, our Bar Mitzvah class was in a pickle. We had grown up together, moved on to high school together, and graduated from Tihon. Together. Normally, that would have been the end of our religious school education. So we decided to take it further, and fundraised for years to make a post-Tihon trip to Israel together. So now imagine this group of friends looking for any opportunity to be with each other. Majority ruled and Debby Singer found herself collaborating with the Rabbi to create a post-Tihon class to focus on service to our community. While the stresses of high school condensed our group into a select few of the original group, we remained fired up. A year later, the grade below us teamed up and we refocused our desires for this group of teens. As a whole, we decided that our interests favored most the situation in Darfur. Our temple has always been an active supporter of helping the Darfurians, and as the next generation, we knew that we wanted to carry on that dream.

And now, eight teens have enrolled in a program that will certify us officially as youth activists, through the Jewish World Watch. Already the fruits of our labors can be seen in the very shirts we wear tonight. Sitting around a table in the lounge, our group pondered. We thought long and hard on what we could possibly make that would not only financially benefit Darfur, but would also educate people. And so we designed t-shirts. The kelly green is the official color associated with Darfur, and the back reads "darfur. 2003-?. do not stand idly by" All profits go towards Darfur through the Jewish World Watch, and we proudly wear our shirts to remind our congregants of this tragedy. And while I'm sure you all are expecting us to advertise our shirts during our speech, we would never. But just for the record, they

are being sold during religious school hours, or Sunday mornings for \$20. But the point we really want to emphasize is that our group is nothing without the congregation. Without you. We are teenagers, and we want the world we grow up in to be a better place.

Do you all remember growing up aspiring to be a doctor? Or a fireman, a police officer, a president, or a super hero? Sure there is glory and action that attract kids to jobs like that. But what makes them so great in the first place? They make a difference in our community. As children we tend towards this beautiful optimism for the world. We have infinite possibilities, and as we grow older, we begin to slow down, see the pain that afflicts our world, and often, our hopes for ourselves and our planet diminish. We become more aware of our self. I am just one person. A tiny speck in relation to the entirety of the world. So how can selling a bright green t-shirt lead to the end of a genocide? If Schindler had thought that way, where would we, as Jews, be right now? If he felt that rescuing those victims of the Holocaust wouldn't make a difference, who knows how much longer the war would have been prolonged, and how many more lives would have been lost?

That is how I became motivated. I found it so impossible to relate the situation in Darfur to my own life, but it was always easy to travel back to the time of the Holocaust. The generation of my grandparents, and my great grand parents. Those of you that are blessed enough to have known, or still have grandparents in your life, I ask you all to bring them to your mind. They have their quirks, their trademarks, their nude colored orthopedic shoes on, but they are family. They are flesh and blood to you. Now imagine them your age, trapped in a world that sought to destroy them, terrified for their lives. You cannot sit there, and deny that that affects you in some way. We look at the Holocaust and we see all the evils of the world released upon innocents. And we cry, and we feel that anger. And we think, if we lived in that time, and we were faced with the decision of helping or eliminating those Jews, we would always do the right thing. We would do everything in our power to help. But we couldn't be there. We couldn't help. "I would never let that happen." Powerful words, but can we act them? My inspiration that keeps me going is using that anger, that passion for a generation of lost souls and doing my best to make sure they don't die in vain. Those lost lives haunt us today, in order to prove what inaction, or indifference can lead to. So channel it. And think of the absolute pain these Darfurians are going through. And rethink dismissing this issue. That is what I did.

We cannot afford to reflect on our supposed insignificance through age or number anymore. Yes we have grown up, but no, there is no reason to leave behind our world optimism. Now, more than ever, we must band together, become the congregation we call ourselves, and END this genocide. There is no time to lose, and every day that we choose to "give up" or "not even bother" is another day filled with lost lives. As the gentile men and women of the Holocaust felt a call to justice in housing and hiding the Jews, so too must we step up and help our neighbors. The power of the individual is great. Albert Einstein knew it. Edmund Burke knew it. Benjamin Franklin knew it. So imagine how powerful a community of individuals working together, can be. Together we can help save Darfur. Take this call to action to heart, for lives depend on it, and as the Torah says, "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbors." Shabbat Shalom.