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You Only Remember Your Tragedies

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You Only Remember Your Tragedies

Abstract

I am tired. I am tired of going to class and listening to my professor's ignore my history. I am tired of going to office hours and them telling me that I am too biased to conduct research on the genocide of the country my family is from. I am tired of the way people give me these looks of pity whenever I tell them what happened to my family. I am tired of not being able to talk to anyone about this because I just feel like I'm spewing absolute nonsense because it feels like no one believes me. If it's not in textbooks, social media, or our classroom discussions, did it really happen? [*excerpt*]

Keywords

Bosnia, diaspora, Education, genocide, Gettysburg, Gettysburg College, herzegovina, history, Sarajevo, tragedy

Disciplines

Civic and Community Engagement

Comments

Surge is a student blog at Gettysburg College where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at surgegettysburg.wordpress.com Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

SURGE

[VERB] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

YOU ONLY REMEMBER YOUR TRAGEDIES

November 13, 2019

I am tired. I am tired of going to class and listening to my professor's ignore my history. I am tired of going to office hours and them telling me that I am too biased to conduct research on the genocide of the country my family is from. I am tired of the way people give me these looks of pity whenever I tell them what happened to my family. I am tired of not being able to talk to anyone about this because I just feel like I'm spewing absolute nonsense because it feels like no one believes me. If it's not in textbooks, social media, or our classroom discussions, did it really happen?

I remember the stories of survival my family spoke of over kahva and meza on humid summer nights. I remember the stories of death, of those who did not and could not survive. The stories of bravery, defeat, hope, and resilience. I remember that this is the story of my people and even if the rest of the world does not want to acknowledge my country's, my people's, my family's suffering, I will make them listen.

I am tired of people telling me to not use the word genocide, because if you use it too much it takes away the meaning. My head begins to ache, and my heart constricts. I want to ask them, "When *is* the appropriate time to use the word genocide if not now? Do you also feel the pain in your heart that I feel every day? Do you have panic attacks in class when your classmates laugh at you for asking questions about why the world watched your people die? Do you know how it feels when people don't even know what continent your country is located on? Do you know what it's like when people deny the suffering of your family?" Do not tell me when to use the word genocide because you do not know the pain behind it.

I am tired of people saying "ethnic cleansing" instead of genocide. It is a good word to use if you want to avoid your guilt. Ethnic cleansing. If you were to google the definition of cleansing right now it would say, "intended to clean something thoroughly, especially the skin." To make something clean, it must be dirty first. Is that what I am? Is that what we are?

I hate the saying "never forget" with all my being because those are the empty words. They have absolutely no meaning, and why? It's not because we say them too often, but because we don't mean them. There is not intent behind those words and they are just a pat on the back for those who were privileged enough to watch people get slaughtered and privileged enough to not intervene.

I want people to listen. I want them to listen to the actual survivors, who are still very much alive. They are not hundreds of years old, but instead vary in age from their early 30s and up. They now have children themselves and live their lives, trying to forget the trauma they experienced. Many stayed in their home country, while others fled for “better lives” and are now a part of a disconnected diaspora. If they tell you their story, listen; because it is not easy to relive these memories and feelings.

I am so tired. I want to go to sleep. But I can't. Because if I forget, if I don't educate, if I don't retell the stories, then who will? Certainly not the rest of the world. Certainly not you.

Remember the concentration camps.

Remember the victims of sexual violence.

Remember the mass graves.

Remember the children that were slaughtered, abused, and abandoned.

Remember those that died.

Remember those that survived.

Remember the 2,200,000 displaced.

Remember the diaspora, who cling to their family's memories.

Remember the villages that were burned to the ground with people hiding in their homes.

Remember the Siege of Sarajevo.

Remember Srebrenica.

Remember Bosna I Herzegovina.

We remember. Why can't you?

-Z '21

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