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Honors Holocaust

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### A Dollar Paper

Many people are still blind to the reoccurring genocides of today. The Nazi Holocaust was the worst crime against humanity in history; nevertheless, the genocide in Darfur is quickly becoming the most fatal event of the new millennium. We cannot forget the tragedy of the Holocaust, but by remembering those who were lost in the past we must protect the lives of those currently in jeopardy. After spending an entire semester studying the background and organized execution of the Nazi Holocaust, I realize that the conditions required for mass murder take years to develop. While it may take a catalyst of evil to spur the slaughter of innocent lives, we are all responsible for the actions that take place. We cannot stand unconcerned. History will not be plagued by another account of unprecedented bloodshed. We are capable of betterment and must act to make a difference.

The conflict in Darfur began in February 2003 after eastern liberation forces demanding equal inclusion in government policies attacked and captured the capital city. In fear of political instability, the Sudanese government mounted a plan of retaliation that included aerial and ground attacks on the region. Secretly funded by the government, an Arab militia called the Janjaweed is responsible for most of the killings. While invading villages, the militia often rapes and tortures the members of the community before sending them to a gruesome death. Since the start of the main conflict, the Janjaweed have massacred over 450,000 innocent people. Over 2.5 million people have been displaced from their homes as a result of the conflict and forced to live in the contaminated and overpopulated conditions of refugee camps. While in refugee camps

thousands more die of disease and malnutrition, especially children. Armed by the Sudanese government, the murderous rampage of the Janjaweed has been suppressed by the commanding politicians. The United States has declared the crisis in Darfur as genocide, but very little political action has been taken to end the unnecessary and hateful killings of thousands. Instead the responsibility has fallen on the troubled citizen. As people with a commonality for survival we must be the initiative for change.

Several organizations around the United States are fervently working to change the outcome of the killings in Darfur. Many efforts are based in Africa; however, educational programs offered in the United States allow future generations to be educated on the brutalities of genocide. By educating younger generations we can prevent the corruption of adolescent minds and minimize the catastrophic effects of hateful prejudice. Based in California, Stop Genocide Now is an organization focused on creating an active resistance to the genocide in Darfur and dealing appropriately with the aftermath of the genocide. I have decided to donate my one dollar to the Camp Darfur division of Stop Genocide Now.

Beginning with the collaboration of many concerned individuals, grassroots efforts led to the establishment of the Camp Darfur program. Striving to empower other members of the world community, Stop Genocide Now provides willing participants with the items and knowledge necessary to recreate a refugee camp in Darfur. While involved members of the organization arrange the event, the action staff of Stop Genocide Now forces the unaffiliated members of the project to assume the responsibilities of an informed and impactful citizen. After the foundation has been laid for Camp Darfur, the new supporters must work to promote the event and raise awareness for the innocent victims of the genocide occurring in Darfur. Using tents similar to those found in the refugee camps, Camp Darfur creates an interactive experience that enables

participants to develop a more personal connection with the genocide. Multimedia presentations including documentary films and interviews from the afflicted combine with the physical experience to create an unforgettable environment.

Camp Darfur can be implemented anywhere in the United States. Previous programs have been held in cities from New York City to Honolulu. Taking place over several days, participants are encouraged to spend the night in the tents and eat food similar to the diets of refugees. Event organizers also invite survivors of previous genocides to speak at the event. Written material and videos are essential in educating those secluded from the direct impacts of genocide, but nothing is more powerful than the story of a survivor. To see and hear the detailed account of a victim is an inspiring testament for the efforts of those hoping to make a difference. No story is the same. The voice of a woman speaking of her children or a man speaking of his wife seems to knit the differences of all races together until a common bond of compassion is shared. The eyes of a survivor tell so much. The eyes that once saw the violent murder of a family now stare into the curious eyes of a high school senior. Their paths are different, but the need for empowerment is the same. The oppressed are inspired by the naïve. The naïve are inspired by the oppressed.

Most Camp Darfur events are held at locations where people gather for a common purpose. Universities are a popular host location because of the highly concentrated population and the willingness of students to learn more about the subject. Students organize the event and are responsible for staffing the area throughout the duration of the program. Camp Darfur is free for the interested party; however, donations and sponsorships are encouraged. Appalachian State would greatly benefit from Camp Darfur. In a time of political and economic change it is important to remember our duty as American citizens. As young people we can make a lasting

impact on the persecuted cultures of the world. We are the advocates for those less fortunate. We must be the voice of concern for those forced to be silent. The world may turn a blind eye to the citizens of Darfur, but with the combined efforts of the American citizens and our leaders we can end the genocide of Darfur. The process will be long and trying but with the encouragement and support of organizations like Stop Genocide Now we will triumph.

The total experience can only do so much. We have been given the resources to better the situation in Darfur, but we cannot be indolent bystanders of the genocide. As people aware of the important need for humanitarian aid we must realize our innate responsibility as people living in the land of the free. In a country capable of unimaginable hope, we will share our chance for a future with those living in turmoil. Education is the key to preventing future genocides. Using the assets and talents of organizations like Stop Genocide Now and Camp Darfur, genocide can be eradicated. As we become closer to finding probable and effective solutions for slowing the conditions for ethnic mass murder, we must continue to ask questions. How can we activate the idle citizens of America? How can we further educate future generations? How can we empower those living in the face of genocide? How can I make a difference?