

Thank you for for your presence today.

Why are we here reunited today, somebody may ask?

I asked myself the same question while engaging in this project. Embracing this project costs time, money and causes emotional distress. So, why do we do this? How and who could this initiative help?

The goal of the project is remembering the Holocaust and paying a tribute to people whose humanity was in so many ways stolen.

But why should we keep remembering the Holocaust?

When googling about it, I came across an website mentioning 3 REASONS TO REMEMBER THE HOLOCAUST. It was particularly inspiring and helped me to prepare this speech. I will present each one of them and connect it to the story of my family.

1) It really happened

This should not even be a matter of discussion, but in the 21st century, the Holocaust denial its, although absurd, a theory that has been around.

For instance, French politician Jean Marie Le Pen once said in an interview: "If you take a 1,000-page book on World War II, the concentration camps take up only two pages and the gas chambers 10 to 15 lines. This is what one calls a detail". Le pen, never apologize for the statements. Other people go even further, denying that the Holocaust even occurred.

Millions that either died or saw their families' ripped apart because of those, quotation marks, "10 to 15 lines" of history would disagree, including my family.

Last year I read the book "Nothing ever dies", by the Vietnamese author Viet Thanh Nguyen. He states that: "All wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory".

Today we dedicate ourselves to preserve memory against the obliterating discourse held by those negationists.

2) The second reason is that Holocausts happened recently.

I grew up hearing my grandfather telling us about his experiences during the Holocaust. He turned 93 this year, and at some point he will not be able to share those memories any longer.

Perhaps some of you had the experience of asking your grandfather about those times. Grandpa, where were you when millions of Jews and other minorities were exterminated? It's hardly an easy subject.

Many chapters in human history left scars. These ones are still open cuts and yet to form scars. We can still apprehend the catastrophe represented by the Holocaust because society didn't change much since then and, our values and morals are still pretty much the same.

Why should we install memory stones? Because in the future nearby we will not be able to count on people around to tell us what happened. The time to collect memories and build memorials to those people is now. Perhaps in the future, we won't be able to see or feel the scars anymore. Maybe society would have changed so much that wouldn't even sense be able to understand how far degradation went, risk doing similar atrocities again. In fact, discrimination, segregation, exploitation and mass extermination keep happening every day. Which leads us to the third reason:

3) It could happen again.

We can have the illusion that our society have learnt the lessons from the past and would never allow such things to repeat. But not only people let it happen before, and even openly supported the Nazi Ideology, but, nowadays, similar ideas still echo and people around the world are still being punished according to their color, religion, gender, and other social identifications, showing us that the lesson is far from being completely learned. A stumbling stone is a small symbol, but it stands against this kind of behavior and it is an attempt to raise to help people reflect upon such topics, even if a stumble at the time.

Last but not least,

We are here to remember two people, David and Cilli Klüger. Kind people just like you and me. They used to live in Vienna and speak Austrian German. They would get up every morning and work at a small shop. They used to spend holidays in the Austrian lakes and ski in the mountains. But at one point in their lives, they were not allowed to stay in the place they called home, to work, to have a routine, to enjoy free time, to be free, to live.

Nothing will change the last days of their existence. Nothing will make the fear they felt less horrific, Nothing will be able to address the injustice and grief that already occurred. But we hope that this stone can at least be a seed.

Nothing is set in stone, not even stones. They are not permanent, this stone that we are inaugurating today will not be last forever, but we hope that it will raise awareness and help to educate future generations. Education and more education are the only path to avoid future genocides.

No goodbyes were said. No traces of their existence are left, except for some few photos, a piece of cloth and a wedding ring carefully held by my grandpa. Symbolically today we wish them goodbye and we hold their names to strengthen memory against barbarity.

Great Grandpa, Great Grandma, I never met you but you told me something I will never forget. Thank you for that. May you Rest in peace.

Never Forget, Never Again.