



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jesse Hamilton

Pause. Remember. Act.

JESSE HAMILTON April 15, 2015



Seventy years since the liberation of Auschwitz, Holocaust Remembrance Day offers an opportunity to reflect on the near total eclipsing of humanity by inhumanity. To recognize what happens when hatred, dehumanization, and anti-Semitism combine. Genocide is too small a word. Crimes against humanity, similarly inadequate to the task. What words can capture the horrific reality of the systematic murder of millions? Words fail in the attempt. We must pause for reflection.

We must also remember. As survivor and Nobel Peace Laureate Elie Wiesel said, “if we forget, we are guilty, we are accomplices.” Beyond the cataclysmic consequences of hatred, we must remember resistance and courage, survival and perseverance, heroism and humanity.

Moreover, we must honor those who maintained their humanity. Honor the inspiring spirit of the Righteous Gentiles, those who offered kindness when others did not. Just as we are all wounded by state-enacted murder on an unfathomable scale, we all triumph in the lives and legacies of the survivors.

And coupled with remembrance, we must act. We must weave the threads of justice, compassion, and humanity through the actions we take today. We must build a world where each of us is honored for our humanity. This calling goes beyond those who hold official positions of dignity and responsibility. The calling to build a more just world goes out to every resident of every community. When we have answered this calling as a community, then will we have liberated all of humankind.