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Today, there are over 65 million displaced people in the world, more than any other time since the Second World War. One of the best known displaced persons in history, Anne Frank, was able to document that displacement from home is probably one of the most difficult situations for anyone to endure. From her account, the people of today can learn valuable life lessons. Central among these is that all people must show compassion towards refugees, act with courage, and most importantly, offer a hope for a better future.

Through the darkness of the holocaust, glimmers of compassion shine in the actions of Miep, Mr. Kugler, and all of those who helped to shelter the Franks against the Nazi persecution. When the Franks came to them, they responded with all they could do to help, knowing the risks associated with helping Jews in Nazi occupation. Christ himself said that there is no greater love than giving one's life for a friend. And, in a profound act of such compassion, those who offered shelter to the Franks willingly exposed themselves to the possibility of death just to give a family something to which all human beings are entitled: life. Easily, any one of them could have turned the family down, complicit in sending a young girl, whose only crime was being Jewish, to her death in a concentration camp. Yet they willingly helped. Another more personal example of this compassion is when the Russians were advancing west, and they came across my grandfather's family. As they approached, they captured all of the people who were in their path, and shipped them to the Soviet Union to work as slaves unless the family had a child under a certain age. Grandpa's family was actually on the train to Russia, when a random Soviet soldier faked the

papers for my great-aunt, saying that she was a few years younger than she was. Because of that random act of compassion from the soldier, my grandpa, who himself was still a young child, and his family, were able to remain on their farm, safe and away from the war. While many people see such deeds as the actions of heroes, Miep herself said in a speech in 1994 that people, “should never think that you have to be a very special person to help those who need you.” Clearly calling every person in the world to take care of one another, Miep states that when people act with compassion rather than with fear of whatever harm may come upon them, they come to see that such actions are not heroic at all, and are rather the deeds of humans showing humanity to other humans. These deeds are not unique to the 1940s. In fact, many organizations throughout the world still try to help the millions of starving men, women, and children who flee persecution and war. The Karma foundation in Chicago provides education to children in Syria, the International Rescue Committee aids resettlement of refugees in America, and the Jesuit Refugee Service helps displaced people through education, aid, and human rights advocacy. The compassion these groups provide undermines the inhumanity refugees face.

Action requires courage as well as compassion, and this courage is the true catalyst for compassionate actions. All people have seen a picture of a starving child or heard about the genocidal rape of women, and feel bad about the atrocities. This compassion, though, is powerless without courage. As mentioned, anyone who helped an enemy of the Nazis was subject to torture, imprisonment, or death, and yet countless people refused to stand by and watch his or her neighbors, friends, workmates, and countrymen facing inhumane conditions. Not only does it take courage to help refugees, it also takes courage to survive as one. One story from Anne Frank’s diary comes during the third air raid when Anne decided to “grit [her] teeth and practice

being courageous.” For the Franks to survive through such ordeals, and to uproot themselves and go into hiding, it took tremendous amounts of bravery. Instead of staying behind and ignoring rumors of what was to come, as many other Jews did, they took a step into the unknown so that they had a chance for safety. Another example is my grandma, who used to hold me in her arms and dance around the living room when I was a baby, fleeing her home. Still a young girl, she tried to escape eastward with her family, and the only way was by wagon. However, the Soviets had cut off the escape path, so the carts had to turn back, but the one with my grandma and her siblings kept going until they realized they had been separated. Grandma was lost, a child without her parents, and had to walk miles back to her family’s house. Had she not had the courage to trek back, I myself would not be in the world, nor would I remember her so fondly. This type of uncertain escape is again prevalent today. Refugees from Syria (11 million), Myanmar (1.5 million), Afghanistan (5 million), Sudan (3.2 million), and many other countries flee their homes, not knowing if the boat they boarded to cross into safety will capsize and they will drown, or even if the country they flee to will accept them. Many of them are separated, as my grandma was, from families and friends, sometimes never finding them again. Nobody should ever have to endure such hardships, so in order to help refugees overcome their struggles people around the world must allow their courage to overcome their fears.

Not only does it require courage for refugees to flee homes, but it also takes hope. To survive such an ordeal, they need the hope that one day they can live in peace, safe in their own home. Anne Frank and her family also displayed this hope. While fleeing, they had no guarantee of any sort of future, and yet Anne was encouraged by her father to continue her studies so that after the war ended, she could live a successful life. The dream of tomorrow never left her, as she

herself wrote that some, “of the best days of [her] life [hadn't] happened yet.” This optimism was contagious in the Secret Annex, and as those around her worried about what would happen if the Nazis discovered them, she encouraged them to push on and only think of what they would do after the war. During the same time, my grandma was being forced out of her home. My great-grandfather, a schoolteacher, made sure that she and the rest of her family kept up with their studies, even making them learn english and other languages so that they could be successful after the war. Another source of hope as they fled was the birth of my great-aunt. In the middle of the night, in the middle of a raging war, and in the middle of a road-side ditch, she came into the world. Being an infant, her entire life was ahead of her, and no greater hope than this exists. Such optimism continues today, both in the refugees looking for security and in the relief organizations aiding them. So many people believe that the only aid displaced people need is food, water, shelter, and other basic necessities, failing to realize that they also need education and preparation for their future. Fortunately, the UNHRC and the JRS, among others, provide this education for refugees. This education provides hope to the refugees, and lets them know that they do, in fact, have a future where they will not be suffering.

While it is true that helping displaced peoples might bring about harm, and that sometimes people simply turn a blind eye toward them, all people in the world must act in solidarity with refugees to help them survive their horrific ordeals. Abandoning those starving families forced to travel hundreds, if not thousands, of miles for a chance of safety should never be an option. And, while it is true that there are very specific actions people must do to help refugees, namely showing compassion, acting with courage, and maintaining hope, there is one simple message to be seen from this crisis—people are suffering, and to overcome this suffering they

need the help of the global population. Every nation and every person around the world must open their hearts and borders to them.