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SPEAKING OF HUMAN RIGHTS

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The world is experiencing abuse of human rights more than it ever happened in the history of humanity with around 65 million displaced people global (UNHCR). Some influential figure such as Wiesel believed that this the worse generation that the world never produced. The 19th through the 21st century we have seen more efforts being paid toward addressing human rights issues that have risen from the slavery trades, colonial time, the two world wars, the several civil and military wars across the globe. Did this violence and crimes served as a learning lesson to human beings to give an adequate response to these manmade disasters? A robust humane response on human right abuse and violence have raised while other leaders are persecuting, killing and discriminating theirs. On the other hand, we see other great leaders who have shown courage and stood with the victims. Are the nations and leaders who have raised up to come to the help of the recent victims of manmade disasters learned ones from our past experiences? Two famous speeches by Elie Wiesel and by Susan B. Anthony has pointed on these issues of human rights and the human response across the globe. In this paper, I present background about the two speakers, Elie Wiesel, and Susan B. Anthony, then compare and contrast the two speeches that they delivered respectively in 1872 in Philadelphia and in1999 in Washington.

The background and life experience of Elie Wiesel and Susan B. Anthony shaped their values and helped term the words in their famous speeches – the Perils of Indifference and On Women’s Right to Vote. The two speakers’ early years are similar in terms of the kind of discrimination and violence they have survived. Anthony was born on February 15, 1820, a period in which males were dominant to women, denying women basic rights such that the one of voting, speaking at conventions or of owning properties. She is also a writer, lecturer, and abolitionist. In her 60 years battle to seeing changes by lobbying the right of women and social changes, she died at the age of 86 without seeing these change. However, she was honored to have her face (first woman) on the dollar coin. Wiesel was born on September 30, 1928, from a Jewish family and is a survivor of the Holocaust. Wiesel is well known for the different roles he has played as a writer and activist and a Nobel Prize laureate of 1986. The trilogy of his novels the Night, Down and Day put together his encounter on the human being's treatment to another human being.

Wiesel’s and Anthony’s speech speak about human right abuse at a different time in the history of humanity. While Anthony defended the right of women in a society that marginalized the women, Wiesel spoke about indifference that led to severe violence of human right. For example, in her speech, Anthony wondered how the women could be ignored when reference is made to the people who build the nation. This discrimination against women led to the conviction of Anthony after she had fraudulently cast her vote for the presidential election and thereafter took the initiative to openly spoke about her determination to the right of women to exercise their civil right (Anthony, 1872). On the other hand, Wiesel also suffered injustice because he was born into a Jewish family (Wiesel, 1999). Based on his race he became a victim of the Holocaust the same way Anthony became a victim of discrimination because of her gender. Both authors believed that the world around them was indifferent to their sorrow and did not do much to address this injustice that they face without committing any crime.

 Anthony lived at a different time from that of Wiesel. The kind of treatment they received in which they were victims of injustice is also different from the kind of violence they were imposed. While Wiesel endured physical and emotional suffering from his tender age, Anthony was a free citizen with a limited right. While Anthony led the fight to end the discrimination that was imposed on the women, Wiesel praised American soldiers who came to his rescue from his misery. Wiesel speech spoke of the situation of violence and injustice around the world with origin from armed and civil conflicts. He was able to see some changes that he would anticipate and wish to be effective during the period of the Holocaust. He was in suffering and based on the changes he noticed he sought to know either we have learned from the past to reduce indifference to the people victim of violence? However, Anthony never saw the change she was fighting for, and she regretted that before the end of her life.

To sum up, the speeches by Wiesel and Anthony share some similarities as both were writers and activists and they also have some differences. Wiesel lived at a different time than that of Anthony and they went through a very different experience of injustice and violence. Anthony’s speech uncovered the discrimination and injustice that was imposed on women and Wiesel’s speech also pointed on the discrimination and injustice that was imposed on Jewish. They both spoke of injustice and discrimination in their speeches based on gender and race. In his speech, Wiesel asked questions based on the progress he noticed in addressing human right and injustice seeking to know the lesson that human beings have learned. Anthony as the first honored woman in the history of the United States to appear on dollar coin, never saw the change she fought for 60 years.

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