

By Congressman David Price in Raleigh, NC -

We are gathered here to renew memory, and to resolve that the memory of those who suffered and died in the Holocaust will not fade, that it will continue to instruct us, inspire us, and warn us.

This memory is historical, particular, and specific, as the testimony of survivors and witnesses here today attests. We remember the murder of six million Jews and other human beings by the Nazis in Europe, including gypsies, gays and lesbians, disabled people, and religious and political dissidents.

We join today in remembrance and solidarity with those in our community who have personal and familial ties to those who died. For members of Congress this is a particularly poignant Holocaust remembrance, for we recently lost our colleague Tom Lantos, a remarkable man who survived the Holocaust, immigrated to America, and eventually became chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Paradoxically, it is the immediacy and particularity of these ties and of the empathy we experience that makes us understand the universality of the ties that bind us as a human family. All too often we think and speak of human brotherhood and sisterhood in lofty, general terms. We may quote the Psalmist—"How very good and pleasant it is when kindred live together in unity!" (133:1) But the temptation is strong to leave it at that, to not take those next steps of engagement and involvement.

As Elie Wiesel warns us, it is often easier to avert our gaze from the world's victims, from those who are suffering or are in need. "It is so much easier," he says, "to avoid such rude interruptions to our work, our dreams, our hopes. It is, after all, awkward, troublesome, to be involved in another person's pain and despair."

Participating in this service of remembrance, in the company of these witnesses, makes it harder to avert our gaze. We should be grateful for that, for it leads us to affirm and to act on our common humanity. It leads us to vow "never again" and to find ways to give that vow force

in large ways and small. It leads us to confront hatred and bigotry and cruelty and to seek to become instruments of the peace and justice for which our prophets have yearned.

I've always been struck by the words of a hymn in my own tradition, a prayer for deliverance from what the hymn writer calls "dimness of the soul."

I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,

No sudden rending of the veil of clay,

No angel visitant, no opening skies,

But take the dimness of my soul away.

May the remembrances in this service today—the specific, painful memories—spare us in our day from dimness of soul. May they deliver us from complacency and indifference, and renew in each of us a determination to take our part in confronting evil and "overcoming evil with good."