

Would You?

(Based on the testimony of Zelda Gordon

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-xpg_a8GslY)

By Shannon Annarella

8th grade student

St. Columban School, Garden Grove, CA

First place recipient

Holocaust Awards Ceremony

at Chapman University, Orange, CA

(http://www.friendsofgh.org/Newsletter_S09.pdf)

If all you had was taken away
And it was just your family and you
If all you could define your life with was
“Just dreams that never came true.”
Would you still dream?

If every day was a fight to live
And walls were your world's borders
If bullets and screams were all you knew
And you were always under Nazi orders
Would you still have hope?

If a loved one died before your eyes
And you found out your family was dead
If you were starving, sick, and cold
And all you felt was fear and dread
Would you still have faith?

If everyone hated you and was out to kill
And you didn't know when to
expect an attack
If life was a living nightmare
Where you knew friends
weren't coming back
Would you still love?

If people wouldn't believe
what you went through
Turned their backs and shut their eyes
Denied all the evidence
And spoke their twisted lies
Would you endure?

If I were Zelda Gordon
And had to relive those times
Build who I am out of nothing
And speak out against their crimes/ Could I forgive?

Pedaling towards A Better World

By

Dr. Frank Chalk

Professor of History and

Director, The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies
Concordia University

Shannon Annarella, your poem, "Would you?", made me cry,
Me, a grandfather, a university teacher, a researcher supposedly cool
and detached.

It made me think about Jewish relatives killed in the death camps of
Treblinka and Auschwitz-Birkenau, of Muslim men and boys lined up
and shot in Bosnia, of Tutsi men, women and children slaughtered in
Rwanda.

Your poem brought me face-to-face with crimes I work to prevent,
Genocide and crimes against humanity.

Then, yesterday, in Montreal, I saw a man with an artificial leg,
He was navigating the narrow space between the traffic and the parked
cars, heading east along Sherbrooke Street West,
And he was riding a bicycle.

Yes, yesterday, I saw a man with an artificial leg riding a bike.
His tattered shorts signaled his poverty,
But something about him spoke of dignity, as well,
As sun burnt and thin, he pedaled along Sherbrooke St.,
Confident and free

Shannon, I saw a man with an artificial leg riding a bike yesterday,
But quickly I realized that he was more advantaged than you and me.
For we who ride on the road towards genocide prevention
Pedal handicapped, pumping only with the one leg we have
And none of us has yet built the artificial leg that we need
To pedal, confident and free,
Like the man I saw yesterday, riding along Sherbrooke St.

Yes, Shannon, pedaling slowly to avoid the hazards we can see,
And hoping we won't strike hazards we don't foresee,
Crookedly we weave between the traffic and the parked cars,
Seeking answers to the questions your poem provoked in me,
"Who will build our artificial leg, the one we need to move us forward,
Confident and free?"

Shannon, yesterday I saw a man with an artificial leg riding a bike on
Sherbrooke St.

And your poem made me ask myself: "Who will stand up to build the
Will to Intervene? Who will join me to build the artificial leg we need to
prevent the next genocide?"

And, standing here today, I think I have discovered the answer,

And the answer is: "Every one of you,"

So we can pedal forward together, confident and free!