

1<sup>st</sup> Place

11<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> Grade

23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Student Essay Contest | Oklahoma City National Memorial & Museum

### Humanity

I have written a number of essays this year for college applications and scholarships, but this is the first one I have written through tears. I wasn't born when the events of Oklahoma City took place but I think if I were, and was old enough to understand them, I would have been devastated. I can imagine the sights and sounds of that day and how horrific it must have been. Just the brief images from this video upset me. I imagine the non-stop news coverage in 1995 was difficult to endure. Images of the building and the debris and the stories about the senseless deaths. I imagine it made many people very sad.

But the thing that really struck me in this video were the sentiments of hope. The feelings of pride the people of OKC have about their city. The thoughts that, even though this tragedy occurred, it did not mean everything was over. We as human beings have this amazing capacity to endure devastation and still continue to move on. This is the wonderful message I took away from this video.

While I am only supposed to select one quote from the video to discuss, I couldn't pick just one. There were a few that fulfilled the requirements and also really touched home with me. The first was from a woman who was donating blood. She said, "Even though we all have our differences, we can all come together to help someone." This is a sentiment that was relevant that day as well as today and I hope never becomes irrelevant. In times of crisis, we need help. And as a society we need to provide that help regardless of race, creed, color or orientation. We are all humans. When a human is in need, it is incumbent upon other humans to provide assistance. I live in New York and we all saw the events of 9/11 that took place here. Again, I was not born in 2001 but living here, so close to where it happened, it is impossible to escape. We have memorials and museums just like OKC does. And I know what the kids growing up with that around them every day have gone through. I've heard the stories from the adults in my life who experienced it, who lost people in those towers. But the stories I heard most were the stories of people helping. People coming together. People providing support. As horrible as those events were, I can think of them with feelings of hope because people helped. My father's uncle recently passed away from 9/11 related cancer. He was a first responder who was on site for weeks helping the recovery efforts. And he wasn't there alone. There were thousands of people there. And that's the positive message I take away from that tragedy.

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Another quote that really had meaning for me was from a gentleman who had lost someone that day in Oklahoma City. He said, "The sun rose on April 20, 1995, it's going to rise tomorrow." That is a great example of that human ability to endure. We all have some form of tragedy that we have had to deal with, some more extreme than others, but tragedy is a very subjective thing. But no matter the tragedy, the sun comes up and the world keeps spinning and we have to pick ourselves up, dust ourselves off and go on. I believe that the people we lose in these tragedies would want us to do that. I can't imagine they would want us living in misery over their loss. They would want us to remember them but not let their loss ruin us.

And finally, the last quote that I found very important came from then First Lady Hillary Clinton. She said "There are more good people in the world than bad and evil people." If we can't believe that to be true, how could we possibly go on.