

HANDOUT 3.5.2 EXCERPTS OF REMARKS BY PRESIDENT OBAMA, GERMAN CHANCELLOR MERKEL, AND ELIE WIESEL AT BUCHENWALD CONCENTRATION CAMP

► Chancellor Merkel

We, the Germans, are faced with the agonizing question how and why—how could this happen? How could Germany wreak such havoc in Europe and the world? It is therefore incumbent upon us Germans to show an unshakeable resolve to do everything we can so that something like this never happens again.

The last eyewitnesses appeal to Germany, to all European states, and to the international community to continue preserving and honoring the human gift of remembrance and commemoration into the future. We ask young people to carry on our struggle against Nazi ideology, and for a just, peaceful, and tolerant world; a world that has no place for anti-Semitism, racism, xenophobia, and right-wing extremism.

Second, it is most important to keep the memory of the great sacrifices alive that had to be made to put an end to the terror of National Socialism and to liberate its victims and to rid all people of its yoke.

Third, here in Buchenwald I would like to highlight an obligation placed on us Germans as a consequence of our past: to stand up for human rights, to stand up for rule of law, and for democracy. We shall fight against terror, extremism, and anti-Semitism.

► President Obama

My great uncle's commander, General Eisenhower, understood this impulse to silence. He had seen the piles of bodies and starving survivors and deplorable conditions that the American soldiers found when they arrived, and he knew that those who witnessed these things might be too stunned to speak about them or be able—be unable to find the words to describe them; that they might be rendered mute in the way my great uncle had. And he knew that what had happened here was so unthinkable that after the bodies had been taken away, that perhaps no one would believe it.

And just as we identify with the victims, it's also important for us I think to remember that the perpetrators of such evil were human, as well, and that we have to guard against cruelty in ourselves.

► Elie Wiesel

Memory must bring people together rather than set them apart. Memories are here not to sow anger in our hearts, but on the contrary, a sense of solidarity that all those who need us. What else can we do except invoke that memory so that people everywhere who say the 21st century is a century of new beginnings, filled with promise and infinite hope, and at times profound gratitude to all those who believe in our task, which is to improve the human condition.