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University Honors Program Rise Up! Essay

My mother always tells me the saying that, "Evil thrives when good men do nothing." Looking at history, there are copious instances where this statement held true and apathy and indifference have won out, resulting in devastation that could have easily been prevented. Like the rise of Adolf Hitler due to the failings of the League of Nations, international catastrophes are often caused from a failure to speak out and demand action. Despite these international incidents, in our everyday lives too, small injustices occur due to inaction. I have never personally witnessed injustice on par with worldwide influence, and have only experienced wrongdoing on a smaller scale. Though not of global impact, my encounters have been just as poignant and significant on a local level, literally hitting home for me, especially because my experience occurred in my own neighborhood just this past summer. Whether global or at home, in a world where a divide exists between those who need help and those that are capable of giving it, it is crucial to rise up as an advocate for those who have no voice themselves because if fairness is expected, it is only right to reciprocate in return.

Everyone knows the Chicagoland area can face two extremes: unbearably hot and miserably cold. It is well known that these conditions are barely bearable, let alone comfortable, for anyone. Due to these extremes, most people would rather find something to do indoors in either season than face buckets of sweat or the threat of frostbite, respectively. On one particularly hot summer evening about a month ago, my best friend and I were walking back to her house after a snack spree. We strolled down a busy street in our neighborhood, familiar with the retail stores and businesses lining it, and neared a lounge where patrons can play slots and other similar video games. I had passed it almost every day of the summer, the location being so close to my friend's house, but something stood out about the lounge this time. A black Mustang was parked in a space particularly close to the sidewalk, and glancing at the vehicle as we passed, I noticed a small dog, presumably a Shih Tzu, panting heavily in the back seat. I

froze in my tracks before rushing over to check on the dog. Upon closer inspection, the car's windows were barely cracked open and I discovered that not one, but *two* small dogs were trapped in the vehicle. Knowing that that interior temperature of a car can increase by at least ten degrees more than the temperature outside on hot days, I knew the cracked windows weren't providing any relief for the dogs and became extremely upset. There was no water to be seen in the vehicle and the car wasn't running so it was clear that the air conditioning was not in use. Sweat was dripping down my back just standing there; I could only imagine how bad it was for the dogs effectively baking inside the car. I knew that I had to take immediate action. I looked around for an owner and debated going inside the lounge to ask who had left their dogs in the car to fend for themselves against the oppressive heat. Instead, I called the local police's non-emergency number to report what I had seen as soon as my friend and I rushed back to her house right around the corner. Dispatch sent a car over immediately to check on the dogs and resolve the situation. I was relieved, but also alarmed that the owners had been so negligent, considering that summer news frequently features felony charges brought against people who leave their dogs unattended in the heat. As a dog owner and animal-lover in general, this experience was particularly jarring and heightened my awareness to the extent of animal abuse that occurs every day.

When considering issues plaguing the world today, thoughts immediately flicker to various forms of human suffering. World hunger, disease, poverty, climate change, war—the list goes on, but it is often forgotten that burdens are shared not only among people, but with others whom the planet is shared as well. Earth is home to many creatures beside ourselves, but they are at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to speaking out, because they have no means of communicating verbally. Animals cannot communicate in a way that is wholly understandable to humans, even with their simple forms of body language. An animal cannot express distress due to thirst or cry for help when in pain. Likewise, an animal cannot think to break a car window if they are left to combat the heat with no relief. Therefore it

is the responsibility of people to rise up and advocate for the proper treatment and care of animals, especially if animals are expected to serve their purposes as well.

Because many animals are domesticated for human labor or companionship, these creatures have had the viciousness tamed out of them, becoming dependent and losing many of their natural defenses in the process. Malala emphasized rising up for those who have no voices, and it is equally critical to provide for and defend animals because human influence has rendered them not only voiceless, but also defenseless. Animals are therefore not only unable to speak out, but also helpless and subject to the whims of people providing their care due to domestication and human dominance. If there is a basic expectation that people regard each other with compassion, integrity, justice, and equality, it is only right to do the same for the creatures from whom unwavering loyalty and obedience are expected, despite repeatedly being exploited and even eradicated by people. Malala spoke up for those that were deprived of the opportunities to become educated and speak for themselves, and it is equally as important to rise up and advocate for those that not only have no means of doing so, but also literally have no voices.