

8. Ashes

In the chapter titled "Ashes," the author reflects deeply on the Holocaust and its lasting impact, contrasting it with contemporary issues of violence against Latin American immigrants in the U.S. educational curricula today include lessons on the Holocaust, a stark contrast to the author's childhood in the 1970s. Memories evoke the haunting images from films depicting atrocities, as well as personal experiences with Jewish families recounting their losses during this time. The author recalls watching powerful documentaries and reading memoirs that shaped their understanding of genocide.

An obsession with the historical oppression of marginalized groups emerges. The narrative links the Holocaust to modern-day violence, notably the Salvadoran Civil War, which the author witnessed through a documentary. This sparked a lifelong commitment to uncovering the stories of those who have suffered in Latin America, revealing parallels between past and present atrocities. By visiting locations tied to historical violence, such as the site of Víctor Jara's execution in Chile, the author seeks to understand the interconnectedness of these tragedies, revealing their familial ties and personal histories.

Recent findings on trauma suggest this obsession may root itself in inherited memories of violence. The chapter discusses the ongoing deaths at the Mexican border, where countless migrants perish in the desert while seeking a better life. The U.S. government's immigration policies create a treacherous landscape, leading to thousands of undocumented deaths, often hidden from view. The author highlights how the federal approach to border control effectively acts as a "killing machine," denying responsibility while simultaneously enacting brutality.

Moreover, the text broadens its scope beyond the Holocaust, connecting historical genocides, such as the Armenian and Native American tragedies, emphasizing their emotional resonance within Latino communities today. The author posits that the violence perpetrated against immigrants echoes historical atrocities, demanding recognition of their shared genealogical suffering. By articulating these themes, the chapter weaves a tapestry of violence, neglect, and an ongoing struggle against systemic oppression, probing the moral implications of a society that allows such horrors to persist in silence.