A shocked me into realizing that there is never any excuse for such brutality, made me aware of the dangers of totalitarianism, and left me determined to do what I could to oppose such inhumanity.

In my early twenties, I read the Strategic Bombing Survey conducted by the United States in Europe and the Pacific after World War II. The Pacific survey documented the effects of the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. No trigger warning there. Understanding the devastating effects of nuclear blast and radiation on the Japanese population helped spark my commitment to diminish the possibility that nuclear weapons would be used again.

Journalism and literature have taken me on many other excursions into darkness. I read all of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s novels about the Soviet gulag, as well as books on the bloody siege of Stalingrad. Erik Larson’s In the Garden of Beasts is a recent further exploration of Nazi crimes, as is the biography I’m currently reading of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian executed for trying to protect the German churches from Nazism. The Spanish Inquisition, human trafficking,