



The Power of the Pause

Six Minutes and Twenty Seconds

Emma Gonzalez stepped up to the podium in Washington, D.C. and faced the 100,000-plus March for Our Lives crowd, with more pain in her eyes than any eighteen-year-old should ever have. "Six minutes and about twenty seconds," she began. "In a little over six minutes, seventeen of our friends were taken from us, fifteen were injured; and everyone, absolutely everyone in the Douglas community, was forever altered...

"Six minutes and twenty seconds with an AR-15 and my friend Carmen would never complain to me about piano practice. Aaron Feis would never call Kira 'Miss Sunshine.' Alex Schachter would never walk into school with his brother Ryan. Scott Beigel would never joke around with Cameron at camp. Helena Ramsey would never hang out after school with Max. Gina Montalto would never wave to her friend Liam at lunch. Joaquin Oliver would never play basketball with Sam or Dylan. Alaina Petty would never. Cara Loughran would never. Chris Hixon would never. Luke Hoyer would never. Martin Duque Anguiano would never. Peter Wang would never. Alyssa Alhadeff would never. Jamie Guttenberg would never. Meadow Pollack would never." Then, silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Shouts of support from the crowd. Silence.



Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Chants of “Never again.” Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

Silence.

The cameras panned the crowd. A few teenage boys looked at each other and laughed nervously. Middle-aged women, probably mothers, held Emma’s fierce gaze. Young women whose eyes mirrored Emma’s pain cried with her. All of us, in awe of her steely courage.

The eighteen-year-old survivor of the Parkland shooting riveted the nation with an unforgettable use of silence and repetition. “Six minutes and twenty seconds...” and then, “... Alyssa Alhadeff would never. Jamie Guttenberg would never. Meadow Pollack would never.” If people in the crowd and the rest of us viewers weren’t already snapped-to awake and alive, she made us wake up, become present. The names, the names—and never, never, never—and we were forced to stop and think, to imagine an almost unbearable pain. We listened as if our lives depended on it.

With her incantatory list of the lost, Emma demanded our attention and our compassion. With that painful silence, she gave us time to reflect, to try to process what was being said—to be with her. The drama worked because the weight and authenticity of her message stood up to it. She knew what she was talking about. This was real. We believed her.

And because of it all, we will remember Emma Gonzalez and much of what she said, and the way she said it, for a long, long time.