Lessons from the Past

Barbara Smallwood

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Cattle cars of the trains  
overloaded, groaning and grinding  
their way towards certain death  
Faces abound through the slats  
some old and weary, already given up  
others determined to survive the odds.  
At the destination, doors are opened  
people herded out like farm animals  
beaten or kicked if they are too slow  
had no food or water for days  
standing room only, barely space to breathe.  
Stationed in a line like bulls at slaughter  
the selection now begins  
Man who thinks he's God  
pointing to the right or the left  
one line to go straight to the showers  
old, young, diseased, feeble  
the other to a fate worse than death  
starvation, disease, exposure to the elements  
these also filled many a ditch and oven in these camps.  
Millions and millions of nameless died  
from hardship, cruelty, neglect  
and unknown nameless experimentation.  
Yet many survived and have lived to tell  
of the horrors and monsters that were  
praying deep in their hearts  
that humankind of today will have  
the wisdom, tolerance, and love  
to never do the same.