Yehi Ratzon Milfanecha- May It Be Your Will That I Share What Is In My Heart Today

When the current president of this country ordered the heartless ripping of children from their parents at the border, and ICE locked up little ones, many of them Indigenous, I felt outraged and wept, knowing that their hurt and trauma would spiral for generations. Then, on social media I noticed posts, like, “This isn’t America. We don’t do that here. That’s not who we are.” I countered by writing, “Actually it is. We’ve been mistreating, dehumanizing, and breaking up Indigenous families since the early 1600s.” But most of us are not taught that, leaving us with a one-sided version of history, the view from the boat, unable to see the view from the shore.

Five years ago a veil was lifted from my eyes about the history of the U.S., the country that became a new homeland for my ancestors three generations ago. I was listening to WBUR and heard a piece about the recent formation of a truth and reconciliation commission in the state of Maine charged with uncovering the facts behind the forced removal of Wabanaki children from their parents as part of the ongoing attempt in this country to coercively assimilate Indigenous people into white culture. Maine’s child welfare system had been taking Indigenous children away from their parents for decades, in violation of a federal law. I was horrified by this and the fact that I knew nothing about it. And so, for the past five years I have been on a journey to overcome my own ignorance, a journey that led me and my colleagues to release a feature documentary film, *Dawnland*, and an extensive teacher’s guide, that tell the story of that truth commission.

As Jews, we are survivors of historical and intergenerational trauma. We know the pain of erasure, of forcible separation of children from parents, the perils of assimilation, the anguish that comes from the denial of our truth. With that knowledge, I pray to the Source of All Creation that I be allowed to continue to learn and bring these painful truths from the shadows into classrooms and to not close my eyes. I end by acknowledging and paying deep respect to Massachusett people, elders, and ancestors—past, present, and future—upon whose land we gather and worship. May our ancestors rejoice in conversation with their ancestors in the heavenly homeland of our shared Creator.