

The Importance of Holocaust Education – Let Us Never Forget

Imagine if the entire population of our state of Wisconsin was murdered. Every last man, woman, and child executed simply because they were living in Wisconsin. Does this seem like an impossibility? Is this something that could never happen because we are a civilized society? Are we safe from this scenario because we have laws in place to protect us? Is it inconceivable that a group of people from our own country would turn on us? Don't we have a strong sense of morality and sense of humanity to ensure this would never happen? I imagine that those more than six million Jews murdered during the Holocaust believed they would never suffer the injustice they did while living in a civilized society. And yet, it happened. Could it happen again? What should we learn from this tragic, horrific time in our history? Philosopher George Santayana said, those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it.

The Holocaust, also known as Shoah, was the persecution of and murder of European Jews by Nazi Germany from 1933 and 1945. Not remembering what occurred during this time would make us guilty of not doing our part to ensure that it never happens again. The youngest survivors are now in their late seventies. With so few survivors left to share their story, it is up to us to educate our young people, who will be our future leaders. It's also important to educate our current political leaders, our military personnel, law enforcement and the public about what could happen if we are not vigilant and racism and antisemitism is tolerated. More than six million Jews were senselessly slaughtered while the world watched. Survivor testimonies describe being separated from their loved ones. They were stripped of everything, including their clothing and even their hair was shaved off. They were left with no dignity and no pride. Children were torn away from their mothers never to be seen again. Some survivors witnessed the deaths of other Jews by hanging, and shooting. They describe bodies being thrown into piles and being driven off in trucks. Some chose to starve themselves to death rather than endure the daily torture dealt by the Nazi soldiers. Only 1% of the population is considered psychotic, according to psychguides.com. The monstrosities of this time were not committed by psychotic people. Rather, mostly ordinary people were convinced that they were helping their home country of Germany be a better place. The same people who came home and kissed their children goodnight, loved cake and ice cream and puppies, were capable of killing children.

The Holocaust occurred because people allowed discrimination and hatred to become acceptable. This led to legalized mass murder. Fear was a driving force that pushed the German citizens into doing the unthinkable. A bad economy and political unrest was used to install fear in the citizens of Germany. Hitler was a master of self-promotion and propaganda. He used fear and threats to take control

of Germany. Once he had control of the military and the government, he was determined to rid the world of the Jewish people and anyone he believed to be unfit to live. Now is the time to be careful who we elect into our government offices. With tensions rising between some countries and religious beliefs being challenged daily, our government must be sensitive to ALL cultures and beliefs. This can be accomplished through education. By educating future generations about the Holocaust, we can give our young people knowledge and guidance to making positive choices when choosing our leaders.

Ed Karl Jaspers who was persecuted by the Nazis said, "That which has happened is a warning. To forget it is guilt. It must be continually remembered. It was possible for this to happen, and it remains possible for it to happen again at any minute. Only in knowledge can it be prevented." Wisconsin is among a dozen US states that has proposed a mandatory Holocaust education bill. This is a good start to ensure our youth are educated so they do not allow false news to turn people against each other and create another Holocaust situation. In a country where free speech is a given right, we must be careful not to use this right to spread hatred. If we are not speaking out against racism and are tolerating intolerance or hateful behavior we become a guilty bystander. By dehumanizing others, one could commit unspeakable acts towards them, such as what occurred during the Holocaust.

To assume that this could never happen again would be foolish. With today's advances in technology it is much easier and faster to spread messages of hate, fear, intolerance, and false news. If we are not careful we could easily fall prey to the wrong messages from our peers and our countries leaders. The Holocaust could happen all over again. We live in a world full of diversity and people with unique qualities. Tragic that so many died needlessly in the Holocaust. We will never know what they may have contributed to our world. What they may have invented, perhaps a cure for cancer or another dreaded disease. Perhaps they would have fed the worlds starving children or written the most beautiful poetry we have ever known. So much potential senselessly taken from us because of fear, and abuse of power. Not only must we remember this tragedy from our past, we must also arm our citizens with the ability to filter out fake news and the messages from fear mongers whose goal is to create unrest in society. More than eleven million lives lost, let's not let their cries be forgotten. Let us learn from our past so we can have a better, more peaceful future. Let us learn the past so that we are not destined to repeat it.