

Why it is Important to Remember the Holocaust

Elie Wiesel once said, “We could not prevent their deaths the first time, but if we forget them they will be killed a second time” (Wiesel). To forget the true horror millions of people faced during the Holocaust would completely diminish the true importance of learning about this event. It’s important to remember the Holocaust so people don’t deny it happened, to help stop something like it from happening again, and to understand how it changed the lives of the survivors forever.

It’s important to remember the Holocaust because otherwise, deniers will spread myths, ignoring the truth that shows that the Holocaust has too much evidence to be denied. “Holocaust denial is a form of antisemitism. The only reason to deny the Holocaust is to inculcate and foster antisemitism. The Holocaust has the dubious distinction of being the best documented genocide in the world, so for anybody to disbelieve, they’ve got to come to it with some sort of preconceived notion” (*Explaining Holocaust Denial - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*). There is so much evidence for this genocide that deniers are simply people that refuse to see the proof right in front of them for this horrific event. According to The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), After the war, while the trials in Nuremberg were going on, German documents proving the Nazi government had done the oppression and annihilation of the Jews were submitted. This evidence had many photographs and films made by the Nazis. (*Combating Holocaust Denial: Evidence of the Holocaust Presented at Nuremberg*). This displays the fact that there *was* proof for the Holocaust. If someone can look at this much evidence and still say that the Holocaust never happened, or that it wasn’t actually that bad, then the denier is only being hateful. The USHMM also says that deniers typically think one of two things. They either believe the Holocaust never happened, Nazis had no desire to eradicate the Jews, and the gas chambers didn’t exist, or that the amount of deaths are simply exaggerated and the diary of Anne Frank is made up (*Evidence and Documentation of the Holocaust - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*). Both ways are completely unjust and both diminish the struggles the Jews truly faced. The Holocaust was not a small event, it was a dreadful genocide that killed millions of Jews and other groups of people. To deny what the victims of the Holocaust went through is pure hatred, and it is important to understand this in order to prove that the Holocaust is documented and the oppression so many people faced was real.

Secondly, it is important to remember the Holocaust because it could've been prevented, and we could use what we learned from it to help prevent future atrocities. “The US Holocaust Memorial Museum teaches that the Holocaust was preventable and that by heeding warning signs and taking early action, individuals and governments can save lives” (*Genocide Prevention - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*). This shows how we are being taught and showed the warning signs that many civilians ignored that allowed the Nazi party’s views to escalate. Learning this allows us to see what could’ve happened or who could’ve been saved had early

action taken place. Of course, back then, spread of news was slower, and no one knew what would eventually happen when the Nazi party rose to power. Now, we know more and are able to contact people faster, allowing us to be safer and take action quicker if we see something happen. The USHMM says that back while the war was going on, a lot of Americans did receive news about the war, even though it was partially inaccurate, and dismissed or ignored it, thinking it was exaggerated (*Could the Allies Have Stopped the Killing? - Americans and the Holocaust - United States Holocaust Memorial Museum*). This further proves the dismissal of the oppression that the war was already putting on groups of people and the signs people could've listened to in order to prevent further cruelty. Now, we can take what we've learned and listen to early warning signs, so this doesn't happen again. "As genocide is most likely to occur during war, one of the best ways to reduce the chances of genocide is to address the root causes of violence and conflict: hatred, intolerance, racism, discrimination, tyranny, and the dehumanizing public discourse that denies whole groups of people their dignity and their rights" (Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Annan). This proves how genocide doesn't start right away, and sometimes it can start with just small acts of hatred. As our world gets even more antisemitic with the continuation of the war against Hamas, we can work to stay safe and accept one another, not allowing more terror to ensue. Remembering the Holocaust allows us to understand how it happened and how we can make sure it doesn't happen again.

Lastly, it is important to understand what the survivors of the Holocaust went through in order to understand the true horrors of the genocide. First, it's important to understand that the survivors didn't necessarily find a new home directly after the Holocaust. "Following the liberation of Nazi camps, many survivors found themselves living in displaced persons camps where they often had to wait years before emigrating to new homes" (*Effects and Aftermath of the Holocaust*). After the end of the war, the survivors' struggles did not end. This proves the extent to which the survivors of the Holocaust went through, and this shows how they had to continue to endure hardships. The obstacles didn't simply stop after the Holocaust technically ended, and survivors had to continue to fight for a home and safety. Additionally, the survivors had to face the mental trauma of the Holocaust, awful experiences that would remain with them forever. The UK Imperial War Museums said that the trauma the survivors of the Holocaust faced were witnessing their parents starve to death, disappear, or sometimes shot in front of them. This trauma would stay with them forever, taking years of work to reconstruct their lives after the suffering (Imperial War Museums). The survivors of the Holocaust went through so much, and in order to truly understand the impact of the Holocaust, the survivors' stories need to be heard. However, so few survivors, specifically Jews, did survive the Holocaust and were able to share their stories. The International Journal of Epidemiology says, "Of the Jewish inhabitants of Amsterdam 25.9% survived the Holocaust" (Tammes, 2007). The amount of Jews that did survive the Holocaust shows how horrible it really was. Survivors not only had to endure the horror of the genocide itself but watch others die as well. The stories from survivors of the Holocaust show what really happened and are so important to listen to in order to understand the atrocities of the Holocaust.

We must remember the Holocaust because otherwise, deniers will spread hate and lies, to understand how it could've been and can be prevented from happening again, and to understand what the survivors went through. Especially with all the hate there is in the world right now, it is more important than ever to teach about the injustices of the Holocaust and keep the stories of

the survivors alive. We can honor the memory of the Holocaust victims by educating ourselves and others as well as advocating justice for victims of hate. Together we can keep the stories of the Holocaust alive and continue to remember and teach about the horrific events that took place just eighty years ago.

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