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The Holocaust: Learning for the Future Over one million children were murdered in the horrific event the world has come to know as the Holocaust. An estimated eleven million were killed, six million being Jews. The Nazis, led by Adolf Hitler, diminished nearly two-thirds of all Jews living in Europe. Harmless individuals were denied the right to health insurance, occupations, and public transportation among the myriad of restrictions (History of the Holocaust: An Introduction). They were labeled with yellow stars, indicating they were Jews, separate and inferior from the rest (The Holocaust/ Grueling numbers such as these are why I feel it is crucial to commemorate the history of the Holocaust and pass on the lessons of brave, innocent individuals to future generations in order to create a society that welcomes all people regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, or culture. The summer after my eighth grade year, I took a trip with my fellow classmates to Washington, D.C. I had just finished learning countless events that had taken place in history. Yet, I had plenty more to learn. On our second day, our group took a trip to the Holocaust Memorial Museum. As I walked the halls, I connected with the agony depicted in the images and descriptions of innocent individuals being tormented. In front of me were some of Anne Frank's belongings that told a story of the ongoing struggles she and her family underwent in order to remain safe from danger. My eyes suddenly caught a quote on one of the walls that had explained that many other ethnicities had suffered pain, including Armenians. Being of Armenian descent, this allowed me to connect even more with what people had to endure. The link became stronger because I realized that the essence of human beings is that we are all different for a reason. Instead of trying to change ourselves, we must embrace who we are. I was soaked in the experience as a chance to better understand others' lives. Our tour coordinator informed us that we had a surprise at the end of our day at the museum. Suddenly, we turned the

corner and Mrs. Dorothy sat on a chair waiting for us. She was a Holocaust survivor. She handed each of us a paper that told the story her family went through. For an hour, we sat still, our eyes locked into her presence. It was hard to believe that a woman, now over 90 years of age, had the courage all through her life to keep fighting on against prejudice. She reminded us how much power adolescents have in this world. Mrs. Dorothy's influential words were embedded in my memory.

As builders of the future, we owe it to future generations to educate people about the importance of eliminating prejudice and living with open-minds. Our world is far more complex than it was in 1933, creating many more worries in people's minds about the possibility of racism, prejudice, and violence. It is important to realize that history is not merely composed of plain facts that will simply go away. Humble individuals then and now are not given the chance to express themselves freely and live the life they aspire. The victims of the Holocaust were outcasted, thrown into concentration camps, and left with nothing but the slightest bit of hope that they may someday be able to live without inhibition. It is our responsibility to make sure that something like this does not occur again by learning from our mistakes of prejudice. There is no justification for aversion towards individuals plainly because their origin is not the same as another group's.

The atrocity and affliction fathers, mothers, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and children endured beginning in 1933 are appalling. As Inga Clendinnen frighteningly expressed, "Almost three thousand men, women, and children (there were many children) died in the gas chambers in the course of a single night. Only on that night did they realize that they, too, had been marked for death" (Reading the Holocaust 7). This serves as a compelling lesson. It is our responsibility to keep the victims' stories alive and pass them on to generations because without them, the truth

about how consequential prejudice can be will dissipate. The Holocaust is an integral part of our history. Without it, we would be blind to the repercussions of unfair treatment and the strength human beings have to overcome them. Such a powerful event in history serves as a lesson for tolerance, goodwill, compassion, and warning. We cannot map out the future to predict whether or not such events will occur once more. However, we have the ability to make sure they do not happen again. The Holocaust portrays the impact that a massive group of violent people can have solely because they believed certain human beings were not worthy enough. It shows the escalation of ideology that motivated a leader and his followers to strip man of moral and mental strength. To educate future generations about the Holocaust is to show them the impact that intolerance and prejudice towards others can have and to help them, understand that by changing our attitudes towards others, we have the ability to eliminate intolerance.

We are constantly reminded: the youth is the future. It is incredibly true. Their ideas about how a society should be shaped by morals and ethics are ultimately the reasons why we live the way we do. One of the most important ways to fight against discrimination, violence, and prejudice is to broaden our perceptions of people in society and respect diversity. Living in such an immensely diverse world creates excitement and opportunities to learn more about one another. It does not serve as a reason for human beings to torment one another because of differing ideologies. Creating an environment that welcomes people of all ethnicities, races, and cultures is a powerful approach to eliminating discrimination, prejudice, and violence. However, this proves to be a challenge because other genocides such as ones in Bosnia, Armenia, Darfur, and Rwanda have taken place. For example, the genocide in Rwanda, unlike the Armenian and Jewish holocaust, was followed by journalists and cameras who reported what they saw during and after the mass killing (Talking about Genocide). The idea is for individuals to be aware of

what is going on and know the importance of diminishing such cruelty. If generations are not being educated about the injustice that occurs in the world even to this day, there is no way for them to stop it. Without dissenting opinions, we would not be able to grow from each other by accepting other people's opinions. This does not necessarily mean that one is obligated to agree with an opinion differing from his or her own. It only means that individuals should respect the differences among people. Open-mindedness to contrasting opinions and the elimination of intolerance allows us to gain new perspectives and enables growth in humanity that we would not otherwise be able to gain if prejudice, discrimination, and violence were present.

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