

ENCOUNTER WITH HOLOCAUST MEMORY, Part 2

Temple students (HIST 2001: *The Historian's Craft*, fall 2019) respond to Göttingen students' responses to Adina Langer's "Holocaust History."

Task: Read your German peers' responses to Adina Langer. Reflect on your own encounters with Holocaust memory and share how they: 1) align or contrasts with how Adina suggests we remember; and, 2) compare with how students in Germany encounter Holocaust memory.

Due: November 18, 2019

Cate Keeney

It's hard for me to recall my exact experience with Holocaust memory, it's hard to remember exactly how the subject was broached, especially at a younger age. However, in my school career, we read several books about or relating to the Holocaust such as *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry and *Night* by Elie Wiesel. Something that really stood out to me from Adina Langer's piece was her insistence on not having people participate in role playing activities or simulations unless you were a specially trained Holocaust educator, because I feel like that's something we did a lot in school when we were younger, especially in dealing with learning prejudice. One educational moment that stands out for me is the viewing of the film *The Wave* from 1981 that shows a high school teacher conducting a social experiment on his class that simulated the rise of fascism in Germany, and demonstrated how quickly people would turn on each other and blindly follow the leader. I watched that film multiple times, in different classes and different grades. I believe the message was to show students how easily fascism can happen anywhere, and how people can allow such horrible things to occur. This reminds me of what several students said in their paragraphs. Imke Dreyer and Judith Pantenberg both talked about their own family members never opening up or remembering what happened because they were ashamed they hadn't done anything or had even been complicit. I feel like trying to repress those memories isn't the best or healthiest way to process the grief and guilt, and it's not the best way to memorialize such a tragic event. As Ruben-Werner Bartling writes in his paragraph, talking about the past even though it is uncomfortable is absolutely essential. People need to be aware of what happens so history doesn't repeat itself.

Alexandria Kazandjian

Over the summer, I visited Amsterdam while I was studying abroad in Rome. Though I was able to get into the Anne Frank house, an experience that was truly unforgettable, the monument that stuck with me was the Homomonument located in the center of Amsterdam. This grouping of three pink triangles within a larger triangle was erected to honor the memories of LGBTQ+ peoples in the Netherlands who have been persecuted because of their identities. I had been excited to see a monument completely dedicated to LGBTQ+ identities, however when I got to the site, I could not find the monument. The memorial was so grime-covered and abandoned that I could only recognize it after carefully scrutinizing images of it I had found on the internet. The sign explaining the site's significance was placed next to an outdoor urinal, leaving this place of remembrance and solemnity smelling like piss. The treatment, and utter

neglect, of this memorial struck me as symbolic of the treatment of LGBTQ+ identities, especially within the story of the Holocaust. Homosexuals, as Mira stated in her response, are treated like an afterthought and not taught about in schools. Imke Dreyer expressed the same sentiment, suggesting a deliberate erasure of the persecution faced by other identity groups when teaching about the Holocaust. What does this marginalization say about German society today? Why are other identity groups neglected in stories about Holocaust atrocities? As Adina Langer asserts in her article, it is our responsibility to look at these identities and include them in “comprehensive coverage of the Holocaust period.” Not including the stories of other peoples that were persecuted creates an incomplete narrative of the Holocaust. We need to examine all groups targeted by the Nazi regime in order to fully understand the ideology behind the Holocaust.

Dom Marzano

While my memory of childhood isn't the best, I do remember some things that informed my memory of the Holocaust. One of our classmates' Great-Grandma had been a Holocaust survivor, and she came in to our seventh-grade class to speak to us about what she went through and what effect it had on her. I remember her showing us the tattooed number that she had on her arm. Seeing someone who was actually there and related to a classmate that I had been going to school with for years turned the Holocaust into something concrete after all those atrocities seemed so abstract to me. I also remember reading *Night* by Elie Wiesel in an eighth-grade English class. I don't remember much about the book itself but I remember the part about Kristallnacht and how that especially stuck out to me. I remember also being asked “What would you have done?” and not “What can we do now?” I related to Stefanie Storch's account of her memory of the Holocaust when she said how it helps to hear personal accounts, but that we have to be sensitive about how we tell those stories. Another student who also resonated with my ideas about Holocaust memory and sites of trauma noted that “remembering shouldn't be something that's only done in hidden places.” Overall, I wish my memory of the Holocaust was better. I think we mostly learned out of a book in school, but there's a few moments from my education that have stuck out for me.

Brian Broderick

The first time that I was exposed to learning about the Holocaust was through a World War Two movie that I was watching with my older brother when I was fairly young. I distinctly remember the images being shown on the television and being scared of what I saw. It was not until I reached high school where I was actually learning about the specific details about the Holocaust itself. The way my school taught the topic was by going through a general overview of the Holocaust while we were learning about World War Two. In addition, we read the book *Night*, by Elie Wiesel, and we watched the movie *Schindler's List*. This summed up the majority of the education that I was provided about the Holocaust. Other than seeing videos, pictures, and reading the books about the Holocaust, I have not had the chance to visit a Holocaust museum, nor I have I been able to see any kind of Holocaust memorial. It's very unfortunate because from the education I have received it makes the Holocaust seem like this distant tragedy that doesn't seem as relatable to the current generation. As someone that comes from a strong Polish background, I sometimes forget about the fact that my great grandparents fled Europe right

before World War Two in order to come to America for safety. Therefore, I agree with Langer's argument that we have to make the Holocaust relatable to everybody. People growing up today are becoming more and more distant from the past. With so many events going on they are potentially not fully taking into consideration the magnitude of the Holocaust. Furthermore, I also agree with Langer in that we need to make things relatable in the sense that people understand that the Nazi's killed not just Jewish people, but people of all different backgrounds. This in turn will hopefully usher in more conversation about remembering the Holocaust. My experience with memory of the Holocaust is much different compared to my German peers. From what I read, a lot of the German students visited many memorials and even some visited concentration camps. The overall connection of the Holocaust to them is something that is right in their own backyard. They walk the streets that were once occupied by the Nazi's, and that is something that is hard to fathom for somebody living a world away in the United States.

Joseph Gallagher

When it comes to Holocaust memory that I have experienced, I can't say I've had many encounters. Aside from basic lectures and such in school, my exposure is minimal. To my knowledge there aren't really any Holocaust related memorials where I live, despite there being many to veterans of war. I have however had experiences with the National Museum of American Jewish History, which covers the Holocaust in great detail. Beyond that, most of my Holocaust knowledge is statistics based, such as how many people died and the dates of events leading into the Holocaust. While that kind of data is important, I feel that aside from NMAJH there isn't much when it comes to challenging Holocaust memory in Philadelphia, at least that I know of. As Langer said, having more public monuments that express the diversity of those who suffered would allow for a more diverse set of people to relate. Likewise, Stefanie Storch's insight into how seeing their hometown in a film with Nazi flags shows how powerful having a personal tie to an issue can be. Additionally, Tammo Mannott's discussion of hearing information firsthand from a survivor allows one to better relate and contextualize the complex issue that is the Holocaust. Having had a lot of experience with monuments and memorials in a city like Philadelphia, I find that what I feel are the most effective monuments to be ones that express ways to relate to the topic. For example, I had the opportunity to visit the Octavius Catto Memorial outside of Philadelphia city hall. While the obvious focus of the monument is the work Catto did for the city like his work desegregating the streetcars, also included was the fact that he played baseball locally. While not directly applicable to his social goals, I found that this helped me and others who had not been familiar with Catto to relate to his story. This same idea can be applied to Holocaust memory, giving people a way to relate is important in order to provide insight.

Maureen Iplenski

My first experience learning about the Holocaust was not within the classroom, but within a book. As an elementary school student, I was deeply fascinated with the "Dear America" series, a collection of fictional diaries written by characters who lived in the midst of historical events. One of these books included the story of Julie Weiss, a young girl who lives in Austria throughout the Holocaust. In middle school, I was again exposed to the Holocaust through novels. I was an avid reader and among the books I read was *The Book Thief*. The

history of the Holocaust was not mentioned to me within a classroom until my sophomore year of high school. However, I could probably say that I learned more within the novels I read than within this class. The teacher simply reduced the event to facts and figures. Just as Langer complained in her article, these statistics “provoke an intake of breath...but they do not do justice to the people who suffered and died or to the cultures that were erased.” Along with sharing these figures with us, my 10th grade teacher had us read *The Diary of Anne Frank*. To follow this reading, we also watched episodes of the series, *Anne Frank: The Whole Story*. We also watched *Run Boy Run* and *The Boy in Striped Pajamas*. In my own leisure time, I’m confident that I’ve watched documentaries which delved into the topic. However, since that sophomore history class, I cannot specifically remember another time in which I studied and discussed the history of the holocaust – that is, until this class.

When reading the experiences that German students had encountered with Holocaust memory, I felt that Zhe Du’s experiences were quite similar to my own. Du writes that as “a person who was born in the late 1990s, I know the history of the Holocaust more through the history books of schools, various TV series and movies, or museums.” I also noticed that my experiences within the classroom was quite similar to Mira Boler’s experience. Boler writes that “memory focused on Jews, which are of course numerically the biggest group of victims. Genocide on Sinti and Roma and persecution, deportation and killing of Polish people, homosexuals and oppositional political activists were not covered in school.” In school, the Holocaust was illustrated as a solely Jewish issue. I didn’t learn that the Holocaust included other populations until I stumbled upon a handful of documentaries online. Personally, when I learned of the deportation and persecution of Slovak people, I was shocked. My great grandfather emigrated to Philadelphia from Poland during World War I. He fought in World War II. If his parents decided to stay in Poland, my great grandfather could have experienced a much different side of the war. In this sense, I don’t feel as though this history is as far away from me as Du states in their paragraph.

Justin Walters

It was really enlightening to hear from another perspective about how we perceive issues like the Holocaust. For my own experience in a suburban education setting, we had a very run-of-the-mill education. I remember my grandmother was the first one who told me who Hitler was, and what he did, but I was too young to understand his impact. I remember in elementary school reading picture books that taught us about how Jews would have to hide from the Nazis, presented in a “child-friendly” way. Moving onto middle school, we had units centered around the Holocaust. We read books like *The Boy In The Striped Pajamas*, and other historical fiction. These stories lacked the juxtaposition that Langer discusses. Largely, the stories didn’t even include the Nazis with the exception of *The Boy In The Striped Pajamas*. They were often portrayed as shadowy figures, or reduced to certain features such as coats or boots. It wasn’t until we had a Holocaust survivor speak at our school that I really understood. Much like what Tammo had to say, the experience of hearing a firsthand witness is really something entirely different than reading something or hearing it from a teacher. It’s really sad to think about that the next generation of kids may never get a chance to experience something like that. Seeing the viewpoint of the individual versus the statistics really fleshes out the horror of such an event like

the Holocaust in order to teach a more objective story. Melina's experience with the ID Card system in the museum she worked in enforces this idea as well.

Alexander Kontos

For much of my life, I have not had much first-hand experience in dealing with memories of the Holocaust or anti-Semitism. I went to a private Catholic school until high school. Of course we learned about it, but there was very little discourse. We just learned about an evil man that hated Jews and tried to take over the world. I live in a very Jewish community in Pittsburgh. There are a lot of synagogues and Jewish delis and Kosher markets in my neighborhood. When I went to a public high school, most of my best friends that I made were Jewish, and most of my friends still are now. During high school and college, and especially since I am a history major, I have studied it much more thoroughly in my recent years. Jewish culture was incredibly prominent in my life when I was growing up.

On October 27, 2018, a man with an assault rifle walked into the Tree of Life Synagogue in my neighborhood of Squirrel Hill and killed eleven people. A few weeks ago marked one whole year since it happened. He murdered a bunch of elderly people, including a Holocaust survivor. That synagogue is at the end of my street about five blocks from my house. I drove past it for the past fifteen years every day to go to school or anywhere else in my city. It has been hard living with that for me, to know there are people out there that hate the people I know just because of who they are and what they believe. I still drive past the synagogue every day, and it is hard for me to see my community the same ever again.

I feel this relates to Langer's article and the response of Stephanie Storch. Langer talks about 'Relatability,' of the Holocaust and Storch recounts a story of realizing that her town in Germany at one point in time was flying Nazi flags. He remembers recognizing a street corner that was very familiar to her with a Nazi flag on it. It ruins any other memory you had of that particular place and replaces it with memories filled with grief. In another response, Melina Schmidt talks about Langer's argument of 'Importance of Individuality.' She recalled her first time learning about the Holocaust in middle school. The students learned about the "millions that were killed." This way of explaining is ineffective in expressing the inhumane nature of the tragedy. "Six Million" is just a number. People take this much lighter when there is no human or personal aspect to it. I was able to relate to this article very much, because when I learned about the Holocaust for the first time, I was definitely not able to understand what actually happened. Individuality is a necessary factor when learning about the Holocaust because it lets one comprehend the gravity of what happened.

Jahir Lee

The history of the Holocaust is very evil and cruel. Jews are being killed just because of their religion, and held in concentration camps. That's what I've learned in America's grade schooling. Which is very short and simple. Until this point where I can now do a deeper evaluation of Holocaust history. 10th grade was the first time I've learned of the Holocaust, as a class we spent a week on this subject with two of the days being used to watch "The Boy In the Striped Pajamas." A student named Zhe Du states a person born in the late 1990s knows

Holocaust history through history books, various TV shows and series, movies and museums. It shows there's not many teachers who can educate specific details of this catastrophic event. In relation to Adina Langer's subtopic of relatability, which states "relatability is especially important to people who have no direct connection to the story. For these audiences, it is important to emphasize that just because the Holocaust happened in a particular time and place does not mean it was only experienced by foreigners. Another student paragraph I read was Tammo Mannott's about his first-hand experience of going to an actual concentration camp and death chamber. I found this interesting because the experience appeared to be shocking and eye opening. Langer notes that the "Echoes and Reflections" paradigm of Holocaust pedagogy cautions educators to avoid traumatizing their students by guiding them "safely in and safely out" of study. In some instances as seen in Mannott's paragraph there is an overwhelming sense of trauma, which leads to the real reason holocaust isn't being taught properly: because it's used to scare not to educate.

KatieRose Devenney

The memory of the Holocaust here in the United States is often taught in the context of a war that took place far away. We understand it through movies, books, and museums. Instead we are often taught from a young age about the American Revolution, the Civil War, and later our own horrific past of slavery and genocide. My earliest memory of learning about the Holocaust was in Middle School when I was taking German. It was required of us throughout 6th, 7th, and 8th grade to take one of the three languages offered, Spanish, German, and French. Along with learning basic concepts of the language we learned about the history, culture and foods of the places that spoke those languages. We talked about the history of Germany and the Holocaust through a censored lens only speaking of the surface level issues and stories such as Anne Frank. Later that year we took a trip to Washington D.C. for the day to visit the vast and various museums, including the Holocaust Museum. It wasn't until high school where I was taught more about politics, religion, and other issues surrounding wars. We learned about genocides such as Rwanda and the rise of socialism, communism and fascism in Europe. That is when we addressed a deeper understanding of World War I and World War II and the political factors. Another memory of learning about the holocaust was during a summer trip between 10th and 11th grade. I went to Europe on a school trip visiting a handful of countries throughout the continent. During the trip we visited Germany and while there we went to Dachau Concentration Camp outside of Munich. Being there was a surreal experience that is hard to put into words. Much like Mira's encounter with Dauchu seeing the place of so much pain and death was moving. The most memorable part of it though were the places that were built and made to remember the victims such as the gardens and the Protestant and Jewish memorials. I think it is an important part of the visit and takes away from the pain of the memory and gives an opportunity to mourn and respect the people who lost their lives. College has been where I've come to have a more full understanding of the Holocaust. Not only did I come to understand the connections between the Holocaust and the United States role in slavery and racism, but also the effect of this event on an international level. As well as how it still effects families and people of different backgrounds today. Much like the article states we understand events and memories through places and monuments, but it is important to realize the effects it still has today.

Conor Bresnahan

One of the earliest and most profound Holocaust memories I have is when I watched *The Boy with the Striped Pajamas* with my friend who is Polish-American. Though I don't remember much of the movie, I do remember the sadness that his grandfather talked about the Holocaust with afterwards. His parents had immigrated to the United States in the 20s or 30s, but their family members that remained had been in concentration camps in German-annexed Poland. Hearing about the Holocaust from someone who it had touched personally made the idea of it less abstract. It emphasized not only that it wasn't as far in the past as my 5th and 6th grade history education had made it seem, but also made the losses seem less like statistics. This made me think of the German students' paragraphs that emphasized listening to Holocaust survivors about their experiences. Though I haven't gotten that opportunity, considering how listening to someone only tangentially affected by it changed my perspective I can imagine how valuable that could be. I found the German students who talked about how memory is treated by their relatives who may have been complicit, or at least apathetic to some of the suffering really interesting. Imke Dreyer and Ruben-Werner Bartling both noted that their family members didn't talk much about the Holocaust. I am sure there is a lot of regret to grapple with by those who feel like they didn't do enough to reject National Socialism, but considering how much first-hand accounts from survivors seem to effect young people, I think it would be instructive to hear from regretful former-bystanders as well. The article urges us to, "Tell stories of victims, perpetrators, survivors, liberators, bystanders, and the people who played more than one of these roles at different moments in their historical journeys." This allows for a comprehensive understanding of the Holocaust's history. It could help listeners recognize and combat the resurgence of the type of ideas that underpinned the Holocaust going forward and not make the same mistake.

Aidan Copeland

When looking back at my previous Holocaust education I am humbled by how I am not as engaged with it as the German students. The one standout experience I can remember was when in Middle school we listened to the lecture of a Holocaust survivor who had moved to America because Europe always had been erupting into wars. This relates to the paragraph written by Tammo Mannott which also had a story about a Holocaust survivor lecture, but I had different impressions after it was over. I still think back to that lecture and the questions I could have asked him. The main question I wanted to ask was whether he was satisfied with the cooperation and peace seen in Europe with the advent of the European Union, which was not directly related to the Holocaust. I believe that lack of interest in that part of his story best showcases how I have never really been engaged with the Holocaust. It was also relatively early in my Holocaust education, so I did not have best collection of details to connect to the lecture. It was always just that terrible event undertaken by Nazi Germany during the 1930s and 1940s and I never thought much more than that. I feel like I can relate to the paragraph written by Imke Dreyer because it discussed how people can get tired learning about the Holocaust and on some level that was the case for me because it is hard to enjoy learning about something you cannot connect to. I read about Anne Frank once, but other than that never really looked at any other standout story or visited a noteworthy museum I can remember. Thus, my previous education in this subject contrasts with the article as most of the techniques talked about were not used except for the individuality one when it came to the survivor and Anne Frank as wells as juxtaposition when it came to comparing it to the Jim Crow South. The contrast comes mainly from the

technique of relatability talked about in the article as even though I heard a survivor's testimony I was still not able to connect to the Holocaust in a meaningful way. I am particularly sad that I never really learned too much about the non-Jewish people who were killed like the Romani and homosexual people. I feel like my previous education shows that the education system here could better try to get people to connect to the Holocaust. Of course, it can never be as effective as the German education system because there are actual concentration camps to go to, but there need to be steps taken to improve Holocaust education in my area of the United States, and probably the rest of the United States as well.

James Ladd Jr.

Counter to the experiences of those students whose experiences we read in class, my education on the Holocaust could be considered broad and undefined. The American public school system of the southern states did not emphasize the importance of individuality, neither did they invest in proper accuracy or presentation. I was taught a broad overview of the statistics and their relevancy to today as well as the social responsibility to avoid offense. However, I never learned Holocaust memory through memoir museums, regional museums, or many place-based sites of remembrance as those mentioned by the reading; it was not an avenue of education past the direct relevancy to World War Two. Although, in recent seminars have been able to learn more and even visit a small monument near my work. It's a very different style of memorial compared to Buchenwald as described by Manuel Comes, or witness interview and memory museum seen by Judith Panteburg; the monument was a single series of broad plaques listing names engraved in miniscule font. The physical evidence and the weight of memory present therein was not included in my education of the Holocaust history.

Emily Loehmer

My memory and understanding of the Holocaust remained rather insignificant for most of my earlier education. Like most students following public school curriculum, the Holocaust was only briefly touched on and taught as the very simple wrongful death of a large group of people. However, there are a few instances that have left an impression on me. The first came when, in sixth grade, my class read *The Boy In The Striped Pajamas*. This fictional novel was the first exposure that I can recall as an introduction to the horrible events of the Holocaust. Despite its realism, it was still a fictional narrative that I believe was meant to introduce the conversation to a younger audience but was not intended to do much more beyond that. I do believe that given how young my peers and I were, we would have not been able to partake in any meaningful reflection of the Holocaust, so it was simply easier to consider it a distant narrative. The second instance I can recall was much more influential, it was a chapter in my English curriculum where we read pieces like Ann Frank's Diary and watched movies inspired by the events of the Holocaust. This was certainly more informational, but still did not do a complete job of encapsulating the full story of the Holocaust and its many (diverse) victims. I was surprised by the similarities between American curriculum and German curriculum that tends to neglect the representation of all the victims of the Holocaust, since it was the Jews that were most prominently persecuted. This was mentioned in a couple of writings from the German students, like Melina Schmidt, and each also included an emphasis on the importance of representing all the victims. How the subject was handled in high school was drastically different from how it

was handled prior because not only did more of the legitimate history become more relevant, but specific numbers and the true gravity of the event were included in the lessons. While this explained the gravity of the situation, it also made it harder to conceive the reality because large numbers and vague stories made the events feel disconnected. Melina Schmidt speaks of a similar disconnect, explaining that large numbers make the horrific and unique experiences of each victim feel less impactful. It is important to maintain the uniqueness and representation for all victims. Jana Marie Kozubski speaks of a similar disconnect, one that comes from ineffective representation in seemingly misplaced memorials or dedications to the victims. Both of these points coincide with parts of Langer's article, like the importance of individuality and the relatability of remembrance. Another point that resonated for me with the Langer article was the fact that I felt like only one perspective was being taught to me in high school, and that was the perspective of America, and what good America did to contribute to the end of the Holocaust. This felt very similar to the "What would you have done?" question Langer advises against, as it causes a very similar heroic complex that is not entirely true to the event.

Albert Gonce

I feel as if I learned about the Holocaust a lot earlier in life than many of my peers. My father was a Social Studies teacher when I was growing up and often on long car rides, me and my brother would sit and listen to him recap the most important moments of history. I remember learning about the Holocaust in one of these car rides and being very upset about the information. Growing up, my best friend was Jewish and it made sad thinking about what that could have meant if his family was directly impacted by the tragedy. One interesting thing I realized about Holocaust education in school was the fact that we learned about the Holocaust in English class, before we learned about it in History. There are so many influential works of literature based on the Holocaust and it made learning about easier, because we often read first-hand accounts of the people that actually suffered. This is why the idea presented in the Langer essay about making Holocaust education relatable stuck out so much. The magnitude of the Holocaust did not only effect Jewish people, it made an impact on people of all genders, races, and sexualities. Stephanie Storch in her analysis of the document shows how different forms of media can help people empathize with victims. The impact of the Holocaust can resonate with a person more when they can relate it directly to their lives. By doing that, the impact of the Holocaust grows stronger to that individual.

Leonardo Chong de Lima

I don't know how we got to the subject but a Black kid and some Jewish kids, in my English school, started arguing about which people, African-Americans or Jewish, suffered more through history. They started comparing genocides and "ugly" history, trying to compete on which people were the most damaged or hurt people. They mentioned slavery, Jewish genocide in the bible, Africa today and European racist views on the continent, etc. It was a never-ending discussion, almost like they were competing. I remembered that story while I was reading Adina Langer's article when she mentions "what not to do's." She talks about how hurtful and useless it is to compare genocides, it only leads to feelings and heritages being hurt or their history undermined.

There weren't any German students who talked about this subject specifically, however, Imke Dreyer's story resonated with me the most when she mentions the lack of conversations or even knowledge about her own family history because they did not know whether her ancestors were Nazi sympathizers or even officials. Anna Bohtel also talks about another of Langer's topics about "what would you have done?" I remember learning about the Holocaust in school, and all the professors talked about the same scenario to place us in the empathetic side of the story. My father also does the same thing. Whenever we talk about the Holocaust, he mentions that same 'mental game' because, unlike what Langer believes, it works. It is also interesting that none of the students from our German counterpart mentioned the dichotomy and friction between different ethnic or religious groups which might result in distasteful arguments.

Shannon McBride

My experience with the Holocaust, in terms of formal education, has been limited. In middle school, we briefly touched on the Holocaust when learning about World War II and my teacher even did something which Langer warns against which was running a simulation of sorts of a concentration camp. Our teacher wanted us to go without food all day and run laps outside with our bookbags full of heavy books. The simulation trivialized the experiences of victims of the Nazi regime and was distasteful. In AP Euro in my junior year of high school, we spent a whole unit, two weeks, on WWII and yet again we only briefly talked about the Holocaust and instead went into great detail about the types of artillery used by each side on the war memorizing the names of guns and tanks. Recently in America, there has been a rise in the "alt-right" movement. Failure of Americans to acknowledge that this movement is white supremacy and Nazism is grossly irresponsible. This is similar to what Judith Pantenburg wrote about it being important to remember the danger of populism as more people are beginning to lean to the far right. Americans are still not remembering the Holocaust correctly by ignoring and refusing to point out signs of anti-Semitism and racism in American society. I think that this is similar to what Imke Dreyer wrote about in which certain people don't want to acknowledge their families involvement and wrongdoings which is dangerous because it doing so can help prevent things like this from happening in the future.

Jakob Henry

From a young age, I had known about the atrocities that occurred during the Holocaust from watching things like the History Channel, but I was not able to grasp the actual magnitude of the genocide. As a young kid, I only thought about it as something that happened in the distant past and struggled to see the people who lost their lives as little more than statistics. This began to change when I had the opportunity to visit the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum when I was about eight years old. Similar to Zhe Du's experience at the Nanjing Holocaust Museum, the one in Washington was eerily quiet which allows the visitors to deeply contemplate the tragedies that had taken place. What stood out to me most was the huge display of shoes that had been confiscated from those who were sent to the concentration camps. This exhibit helped me gain a better grasp of both the magnitude due to the countless number of shoes and a deeper understanding and connection to the people behind the numbers. Jonas Lohstroh makes note of a similar occurrence when he took a trip to "KZ Esterwegen" and saw collections of clothing that belonged to victims of the Holocaust. Adina Langer stresses the importance of

individuality as viewing people as statistics erases their stories and suffering. This is perhaps the most important idea within her piece as too often history classes focus on the actions of Adolf Hitler and the Nazis rather than the people who had to suffer at their hands.

Katie Iannucci

My first encounter with the Holocaust was in middle school in my 8th grade English class. We read a play about the Holocaust and then read several packets on it. Naturally, I was young, and didn't retain much of the information. This reminds me of Tammo Mannott's paragraph where they mention that their mother had them go listen to a witness speak about her experience as a Jew in the Holocaust. Tammo was annoyed that their mother convinced them to go there, which reminds me of middle school and how I wasn't interested in reading through all of those packets. Upon learning the details, however, both Tammo and I realized how shocking the Holocaust was. That was really the only time I can remember focusing in on the Holocaust in my early education. Everything after that I did on my own. I can remember reading *The Diary of Anne Frank* on my own time for a designated reading book, but that wasn't aligned with a unit on the Holocaust. Like Langer states in her article, we need to work to preserve the memory of the Holocaust. In this case, since my school curriculum wasn't doing so, I took it upon myself to preserve that memory. This relates to Zhe Du's paragraph where they write that as a person born in the late 1990s, they know the history of the Holocaust more through TV, movies, and in my case, books. It seems that even in Germany, there are things that history teachers leave out about the Holocaust, and many students have to do the research themselves.

Michael Klett

My first memories of the Holocaust were when I was around eight years old. My father would almost exclusively watch the History channel. Wanting to spend time with him I would watch right alongside. I remember a documentary on the subject and being upset watching the graphic images of lifeless bodies being put in a mass grave with a bulldozer. It was an eye-opening experience for me about the cruelty of the world. This is why I agreed with and could relate to the author of this article when it says that educators should guide students "safely in and safely out" of the subject. The magnitude of the Holocaust is incomprehensible. Focusing on individual stories while being aware of the scale of these individuals as a collective is the best way to have a personal connection with the events. When it comes to our German peers, they have access to actual historic sites whereas we have museums and memorials. I can imagine the emotional impact of going to the sites being more impactful to everyone in attendance.

Nate Huson

My first significant exposure to the history of the Holocaust was in seventh grade. We had read Anne Frank's diary in our English class, but the historical context had been almost entirely avoided. That was until a few weeks later, when our class took a field trip to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. There our class was presented with Hitler's rise to power, Nazi racial ideology, and the crimes themselves. One exhibit that was very powerful was a miniature sculpture of a gas chamber with dozens or hundreds of people panicking inside, very similar to what Zhe Du describes. We were also each handed an I.D. card depicting the story of

one victim of the Holocaust, as Melina Schmidt handed out in her internship. I believe the Holocaust was introduced to me and my classmates in a way that Adina Langer would approve of, as described in her article “Holocaust History.” Reading Anne Frank, who was around our age, and following the journey of a particular person in the USHMM encouraged us to reflect on the seemingly faceless statistics of millions. The message that we were presented with throughout the museum, not only by the exhibits, but by our accompanying teachers, was that we not only have a duty to remember the Holocaust, but to do what we can to make sure crimes like it never happen again. We were never asked, “What would you have done?” It was always a call to remember and to be vigilant.

Macy Biles

My high school experience with the holocaust was virtually non-existent. The basics of the holocaust were briefly touched on because my teachers thought we already learned a lot about it in earlier grades. We had already been through lessons and tested on it so there was no need to expand upon it further. Surprisingly, I learned more about the topic in middle school. One of my history teachers said that the holocaust was a terrible event in history, but it doesn't always need to be the main focus when discussing the countries, it occurred in or affected. I can see why some people would find this statement insensitive, but I understand what he means by it. These countries that were affected by the Holocaust are more than just this one event. I think it is important to share other parts of their histories. It is an important, need to be discussed event, but it is not the defining thing about them. One of the German students brought up the thought that newer generations are slowly becoming less aware of what occurred. As I've said before, I think that the holocaust shouldn't always be the main focus of discussion when it comes to the countries it affected but that doesn't mean it should be forgotten or not talked about. One of Langer's more important points is that one should be sensitive about people's feelings when talking about the Holocaust but it is necessary to talk and write about it. It is historically a major event and that should be spoken and written about, but done so with sensitivity and empathy.

Hafsa Jones-Rothwell

I have two encounters with the Holocaust that I remember. My earliest memory with the Holocaust was a short unit in middle school. We went over the horrible acts that occurred during the holocaust. We did not learn about the “others.” My second memory of the Holocaust is reading *Night* by Elie Wiesel in high school. We focused on his individual experience. This would be the closest way I learned about the Holocaust that is similar to Langer's approach. As a class we focused on individual stories. I've never visited a Holocaust site like many of the students did. In the reflection by Jana Marie Kozubski, she said “remembering shouldn't be something that is only done in hidden places.” This is something I agree with. She also stated the place should have an informative explanation. It can be hard to find a space that has balance, to have a space for memory that is not hidden and is informative.

Dan Huet

One of the most formative memories I have of remembering the Holocaust is at the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, Germany. The memorial is in Berlin's center district, Mitte, and

the large field of gray slabs make it hard to miss. Walking through the field of tall dark gray slabs, intended to represent tombstones, is an extremely claustrophobic and dark experience (which is what the artist intended). Below the sculpture itself is a museum detailing the policies of extermination against the Jewish people that Nazi Germany implemented in the 1930s and 1940s. The museum did a good job of balancing historical information with stories of regular Jewish people whose lives were upended when the Nazis came to power, and later were taken from their homes and killed at concentration camps. This particular memorial and museum did a good job at adding historical context to the Holocaust that is often absent from American school curriculum. The memorial is effective because it makes no illusions about what the Holocaust was, and leaves no room for any ambiguity about the people who were responsible for the crimes against humanity. I do not think museums are as effective as my German classmates like Mira Boler and Jonas Lohstroh, who visited concentration camps like Dachau, as that experience is likely even more emotionally challenging and you are able to be at a specific place in history where exterminations took place.