Holocaust Report

In high school, I had the opportunity to visit the National Holocaust Museum. While there I learned a fair amount of different aspects of the Holocaust. I saw the collection of shoes from the children that went through the camps, pictures of the mass graves, pictures of the malnourished bodies as they left the camp. I even heard some testimonies for survivors that were playing in a small theater at the end of the museum. Even with that experience, ther are things I did not realize until this week.

I had not clicked yet how wide spread but similar the stories were. Hearing Maria Goode’s grandmother speak in chapel made me realize how far the concentration camps reached. Hearing how the girls were rounded up into cattle cars to be taken to the camps. How they were stripped down and covered in DDT. Hearing a student’s grandmother tell these stories from experience really brought the reality to the forefront. I also did not know that it affected much more than the Jews. The stories of the Corrie ten Boom and Anne Frank are wide spread as the stories of the Jews in the camps. I was not aware that Hitler was sending other people to the camps.

I also had not realized exactly what life for the Jews was before the camps. In my mind it was German soldiers that came in and took the Jews to the camps without much else. Hitler managed to turn the whole country against the Jews. People who had been major parts in the community, friends, neighbors were all of the sudden vilified in the eyes of the people. He managed to convince the population that the Jews were a “satanic force seeking world domination, fomenting social revolutions, and abetting communism, exploitative capitalism, and the democratic States.” The Germans believed they were the peak of humanity, the master race. Because of this, Jews were considered inferior and even an anti-man. This lead to discrimination to Jews and the idea that they were even defective humans going as far as to promote propaganda that having intimate relations with a Jew was forbidden. Jews were forced into ghettos or they fled the country. Their buildings were burned, and their rights were revoked.

Another thing I learned was exactly the scope of how many people were affected and how many more could have been. At Auschwitz-Birkenau alone there were around 1,120,000 murders. This was just one of the camps and only the number of deaths. The number of people living would have been even larger. This in consideration with how many people had fled the country means the numbers could have been even higher. That is staggering to me.

The final thing I learned was about those declared Righteous Among the Nations. After the effects of WW2, the State of Israel issued the great honor. This title was given to those across different countries who had provided aid to the Jews in the midst of all the oppression. Those who risked their lives for the sake of others. Whether it be providing shelter, forging papers, collecting and providing food, and anything else to aid the Jews, they were honored by their service.