

Knowing the stories is not enough, we must retell them

Antisemitism has been present since the early days of Hitler and Nazi Germany. It has almost been a full century since the horrific events of the Holocaust, anti-Semitism and hate crime still exists.

Hate crime overall is extremely prevalent in modern society, especially in the United States of America. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), Anti-Semitism in the United States rose almost [60%](#) in 2017. Currently, the United States is home to approximately 5.3 million Jewish individuals, comparable to the 6 million Jews that were killed in the World War II genocide.

The horrors of the Holocaust began in 1943, where individuals who were deemed Jewish, homosexual and disabled were stripped of their families and belongings. These people were torn from their homes and put into concentration camps, where they were abused, slaved and later killed. By [definition](#), anti-Semitism is the prejudice, and discrimination against Jews. It is based on the stereotypes, myths and overall target of Jewish people for their religious beliefs and the Jewish state. During the Holocaust, some Jews were killed immediately while others were tortured, malnourished and then later murdered; although there was a lucky group that lived. Their stories and experiences allow the Jewish population to be grateful for their liberation and the future of Jewish people as a whole.

On October 27, 2018 it felt like history was repeating itself for members of the Jewish community, especially those in Squirrel Hill, Pennsylvania. Robert Bowers, 46, [open-fired](#) at the Tree of Life

synagogue, a Conservative Jewish congregation. The gunman, Bowers killed 11 innocent Jewish individuals, including one holocaust survivor. As he was attacking the inside the congregation, Bowers was yelling, "[All Jews must die](#)," making this a direct act of anti-Semitism. The FBI deemed the investigation under, hate crime. Rose Mallinger was amongst the victims of the Pittsburgh massacre. Mallinger lived through the terror and horror of the Holocaust, yet was killed for practicing her religion in the United State. Unfortunately, terrible events like this do happen, therefore it is the job of young Jewish individuals to stand up for those who stood before them, retell their stories and prove that in Jews as an entire religion are stronger than hate.

The Tree of Life synagogue is home to approximately 530 families in the Pittsburg area, where some gather on a weekly basis and others only for the high holidays. This shooting hit home to many who live in the Pittsburg area, including 20-year-old Paige Moritz. She quickly called her grandparents once she heard the tragic events of October 27. Moritz, who grew up attending the Tree of Life synagogue was in shock when she heard there was a shooting in her place of worship. Her grandparents, regulars who attend Saturday Shabbat services, were thankfully out of town for the weekend.

"It made me more connected to being Jewish, and made me proud to be Jewish. I attended a vigil, and I started to feel more connected to the Jewish community," said Moritz as she looked down at her Magen-David tattoo, a symbol of Judaism and displayed on the Israeli flag. "When my mom called me she told me that all my immediate family was safe. Although, some people that I grew up with were killed. Knowing these people, the synagogue has always been a safe space for them, they were always there." Moritz shook her head at the fact governmental officials are suggesting

that for the future there should be [armed guards](#) at synagogues. To her that is the last thing she wants to see at a place of worship and belonging to hundreds in her community, including herself.

Anti-Semitism stemmed from Hitler and his government in Germany, where Jews were put into concentration camps across Poland and Germany. The March of the Living (MOL) is an educational program which takes Jewish individuals through Poland and Israel. According to their [website](#) MOL, “Is an annual educational program, bringing individuals from around the world to Poland and Israel to study the history of the Holocaust and to examine the roots of prejudice, intolerance and hatred.” The participants of this trip are accompanied by a Holocaust survivor who retells their stories, their families stories and allows participants to take a walk in their shoes as they tour various concentration and death camps. As the participants depart Poland they are left with a different mindset and interpretation of Hitler regime and anti-Semitism as a whole.

Melanie Greenberg was lucky enough to experience her first visit to both Israel and Poland during the March of the Living trip in 2015. “I remember how awful Poland was and how it took everything in me to keep going,” said Greenberg. During her travels from Poland to Israel there was a natural disaster in Nepal where Israel had their soldiers from the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), on a search and rescues mission to go and save people. Greenberg met many teenagers from Mechina, a pre-army mechinot, and she noticed that there was not a big difference between the two of them. The main thing that Greenberg noticed was that these teenagers were putting their life on the line in the army to protect their country and world, and she lives a normal day to day

life. “On the plane ride home from my trip to Israel and Poland I decided that I was going to come back to Israel after high school, learn Hebrew and draft to Palchatz.”

Greenberg stuck to her words and made Aliyah, receiving Israeli citizenship and drafting into the [army](#). She is currently in her second year in the IDF. Although she was not drafted into the Palchatz, Greenberg has the opportunity to guard and defend the skies above Israel. This trip taught Greenberg about her Jewish ancestors and the torturous horrors and exterminations they went through. As she saw the transition from past to present of Jewish people and Jewish culture she believed it was her duty to protect the Jewish state, Israel and to give back to those who fought before her.

Almost 80 years since the Holocaust has happened, and there are beginning to become less and less survivors to accompany trips such as the March of the Living. Sandra Feld, had an exceptional experience on her journey through Poland and Israel, as she was accompanied by her great grandmother. “As a Jewish adult as well as granddaughter of a survivor, I see my role as making sure that nobody ever forgets the atrocities that happened in the Holocaust.” Feld explained, “Believe it or not, there are still thousands of people in America and across the world that deny that it ever happened. Now, as a ‘graduate’ of the March of the Living, I can testify to those people because I was there and I was it with my own eyes.” To Feld, the Holocaust is no longer a piece of history anymore, it is no longer a story where 300 of her family members were killed. These events that happened will forever be in her mind, because she saw it first hand, and saw what occurred. She believes it is her duty as a Jewish person to continue to educate others and [retell](#) the stories of survivors, including her great-grandmothers.

Lyle Rothman, the campus rabbi and Jewish chaplain at the University of Miami believes that the March of the Living trip he took in 2000 was a catalyst to who he is today. “The March of the Living trip was life changing for me. It was at that moment where I decided I was going to be a Rabbi.” Rothman, a grandson of Holocaust survivor, Miriam Herman, stood tall and told his story. His life was changed as he learned about life in Poland during the time of his grandmothers captive years. Herman, now 90 has been invited back to her hometown through the Polish and German government to retell her stories and talk to the students. Herman continued doing this until she was around 80-years old, and health got in the way from travels.

To Rothman, politics play such a role in life for the Jewish people and that it is so relevant in today’s news. “I think he [President Donald Trump] has not helped the situation in anyway, I think he has inflamed the situation. It’s not just about anti-Semitism, it’s about islamophobia, it’s about a really militant right-wing understanding of who’s powerful and what does power look like.”

Rabbi Chaim Boyarsky deals with thousands of students on a daily basis in Canada’s capital, Ottawa. Boyarsky is the main rabbi which makes up the, Rohr Chabad Student Network of Ottawa. This Chabad network is dedicated to the Jewish students attending The University of Ottawa, Carleton University along with Algonquin College. Boyarsky, who works with students both Jewish and not every day understands the importance of education in regards to the Jewish peoples past and present. “I believe schools aren’t focusing enough on teaching tolerance and awareness of bigotry and hate in our society,” Boyarsky continued, “Sadly the Holocaust gets buried under the broad term of World War II, and the true genocide that took place is overlooked.”

In his thoughts, the change is in the government, and that they need to make a change in the classroom for the future students. He believes, Holocaust studies as well as teaching tolerance in general should be a requirement in middle schools and high schools.

“We can never underestimate the ripple effect our own individual acts of kindness and sensitivity to others can cause,” said Boyarsky, thinking back to America’s support of the creation of the state of Israel. This was how the credit of a simple Jewish businessman who treated his business partner with great dignity and sensitivity when their business collapsed.

October 27, 2018 changed the way Jewish people look at themselves in America. It was a day when anti-Semitism resulted in murder, a day just like life under Hitler’s power. For nearly 80 years the Jewish people have been victimized, abused and killed for practicing and believing in their religion. It is the twenty-first century, and Jewish people are still getting murdered for solely being Jewish. It is the duty of all Jewish individuals to stand up for themselves, their religion and their ancestors who fought for their life through the terrors of the Holocaust.