Many lessons have been learned from the Holocaust. One of the most important, is change. Changes in the way we treat people that are different, the way we remember people who have suffered, and the importance of meaningful change. The experiences they endured will forever be something no other human should have to experience. Continuing to share the unfathomable lives of those who died and those who survived serves as a remembrance and a reminder. It is hoped that this remembrance will prevent anything like it from ever happening again. Awareness of the harsh lives of those who came before us, can help us persevere through tough times.

Let me create a picture of the life of a Jewish captive during the Holocaust. Imagine being a child or teen living a normal life with their family. They played in the streets and shopped at their neighborhood grocery store. Then one morning you wake up to find your friends missing, and then they never return. In the following days, your mind still questions their disappearance, then one by one the people around you are unlawfully stripped from their homes. Confusion sets in and your way of life suddenly changes. Rumours sparking propaganda about your religion spread. You begin to fear that you will disappear with no trace of existence. Your home is gone, your belongings are gone, most of all, your identity is gone. You are forced into a cattle car with thoughts of confusion, but possible hope for a bright future. That is then taken away from you, when you are taken to the camps. Your last physical trace of yourself is your own pants, shoes, and shirt. That too is taken away and then is replaced with ripped old ragged pajamas, and old used shoes. You have become a number, and no longer have a name. You are given a barrick with a leader that will show no remorse for your feelings. Again their purpose is to make you inhumane, you are now a nobody. You get fed maybe once every day so the malnourishment

may start to get to you, but that has no importance to them. You are assigned a post at which you will work endlessly for only a glimmer of a future. You preserved amongst agony and fear and survived.

The resilience shown by the Holocaust survivors stands as an example for us today. Our country may not be led by a person that everyone agrees upon; however, we learn to come together and trust that the systems in place will protect us. There are safeguards that prevent the dangers of the past. Groups rally together to fight hate crimes and discrimination. We are continuously learning from past mistakes and trying hard to implement acceptance and change.

Holocaust survivors taught us the importance of Resilience. They showed that you should never give up and to fight with all you have to survive. Their story, while incredibly sad, inspires us to make changes. The determination that they showed is what allowed them to survive in the last few months in the camps. We share their stories through writings, discussions, museums, and memorials. The creation of memorials help spread awareness of the love, and faith of all the Jews who lost their lives during the holocaust. This makes it possible to share their symbolic hope world wide.

Meaningful change also happens through the placing of value in equal human rights, and ensuring that no one feels silenced again. As we know the purpose of the Holocaust was for Hitler to dehumanize every Jew or homosexual for their so called wrong doings. It should be our priority to make every human feel heard and respected, in spite of their differences. Every human should feel valued. As I grow and learn, I try to be inclusive of those around me in spite of their beliefs, social status, or ethnicity.

In addition we need to show unity for the lives that were lost too soon. This refers to the past and present. There are many instances that this lesson still holds true today and we see it play

out on the news daily. In the past, it was shown when the Soviet troops helped rebuild the families, and the land in the post war efforts. They were all able to join forces, and unify everyone as a whole to do better for one another. They helped each other in rebuilding efforts, and the mourning of losses. Today we have seen unity during times of the pandemic, the inauguration of a new president, and during natural disasters. People find ways to rebuild and restructure, but only when people unify with the same goal.

Living a life with purpose and change is what we can offer to all the people that suffered during the Holocaust. Making a promise to them and ourselves that we will live a life of love and acceptance in remembrance of all those who didn't get that opportunity. After all, we are all human, and deserve to be treated with respect and dignity. Their story inspires me to live with love and devotion to life.

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