

Prompt #1

Jews; Before, During, and After the Holocaust

Anti Semitism is prevalent all throughout history. Discrimination and prejudice towards Jews was especially apparent during the Holocaust. Many people know or have heard of the horrific persecution directed towards Jews in World War Two, but few people know what Jews were treated like before and after the war. Although it is not well known by many, it is still relevant and important.

Antisemitism isn't an idea that was created during World War Two, it has been going on long before the war. Jews were commonly treated as racially unequal to others, Jew were identified as a race in many cases, not just people that adopted the religion of Judaism. During the late 1800's and early 1900's in almost all European countries Jewish citizens were given the same rights as other citizens by law, but the law didn't stop discrimination from people. Jews were commonly blamed by others for events that they didn't start, for instance in World War One Jews battled on the frontlines and yet they were blamed for Germany's loss in the war.

Hitler's rise to power didn't help the Jew's case, it only grew worse and worse as he gained more power. Hitler used racism in his campaigns, he didn't view Jews as equals or anything of the sort. And once Hitler gained chancellorship, it only got worse. Hitler and his followers boycotted Jewish businesses and began taking freedoms from Jews. In 1935 the Nazi regime produced a number of laws related to race called the Nuremberg Laws. Since the Nazis viewed Jews as so inferior that they wrote laws about their racial ideas, these laws stripped Jews of citizenship, political rights, forced Jewish parents to name their children from a list of government approved names, and took away many other basic freedoms. Most famously, on the night of broken glass, the Nazis destroyed Jewish shops and businesses and set synagogues ablaze. The discriminatory acts towards Jews didn't stop there either, the Nazis degraded Jews and others that Hitler didn't deem good enough. These acts continued, then 1939 rolled around.

1939 was the year that marked the beginning of World War Two. The Nazi party separated the Jews and other "inferior groups of people " from the rest, they concentrated them in areas and forced them to work or exterminated them. These people were commonly forced into cramped, unsanitary slums called ghettos. Jews and many other groups of people were forced into labor at concentration camps. In ghettos and concentration camps, death and disease were common. The Nazis provided barely enough food and shelter to live. Many times people were deemed unfit for labor and since they were useless to them, they killed them on the spot. Non-Jewish people could also be threatened, if you were caught helping a Jew you would also be killed. The Nazis ran tests on Jews and others, they used them for all sorts of jobs.

Towards the end of the war, the Nazis knew that they were defeated. In a last ditch effort, they tried to eliminate as many Jews and other imperfect races as they could. In the end Hitler committed suicide and the Nazis lost, but they amassed a death toll of over 6 million Jews. Those who were still alive were liberated by the allies. Even after the war antisemitism still persisted in parts of Europe. Many of the survivors went to refugee and displaced persons camps, but there was still a struggle as to where they would go permanently.

Many of these people went to live in the United States and different parts of Europe. Plenty of Jews and Non-Jews were left homeless until the establishment of the State of Israel in May 1948. They still had to reestablish their lives, and for many this helped. These places welcomed the Jews, but in places like Poland there were still numerous pogroms going on post-war. Not everywhere looked nice for these survivors, but for the most part the lives of these survivors were looking better.

It is clear the persecution the Jews experienced over the years was wrong, and it is important that we remember it. We need to learn and teach more about what happened leading up to the Holocaust, what happened during it, and what happened after it. This happened because enough people didn't stand-up for what was right and didn't understand the consequences it would have on the lives of millions. We need to remember what happened so history doesn't repeat itself.

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