

2008 HOLOCAUST ESSAY CONTEST WINNERS

**Tatiana Gilliland
First Place – 5th grade
Roberts Elementary School**

Have you ever heard of the Holocaust? If you have not, I am going to tell you about it. The Holocaust started in 1933 and lasted until 1945. The Holocaust was a very serious and scary time. After Hitler came into power in Germany, he started to persecute the Jews. He started by passing laws that took away their rights but eventually put them into concentration camps that often led to death. No one knows how many Jews were killed during the Holocaust but they think at least 6 million died.

It is said, “To be silent in the face of evil is to surrender to it, encourage it, and enable it to grow stronger.” People always ask why no one stopped the Holocaust. I think one of the reasons was fear. If you helped a Jewish person and were caught, you could be persecuted just like the Jews were. That kept most people silent. It’s like telling on a bully and being afraid he’ll beat you up too. Hitler had so much power that there were few people in Europe that were willing to stand up against him. Hitler knew how to use his power and other’s fear to control people.

Maybe another reason people didn’t speak up to stop the Holocaust was they didn’t believe it was really happening or wasn’t as bad as people said it was. There weren’t as many reporters during World War II so Americans didn’t see all that was happening like you do today. Seeing is believing. There were few TVs and no internet. Hitler wouldn’t just invite reporters into a concentration camp to do a story and few Jews left a camp once they went in.

These reasons don’t excuse those that kept silent, nothing could, but they make it easier to understand why the world turned its head and ignored one of the worst evils ever to happen.

Shayla Bussey

**Elementary School 2nd place winner
Roberts Elementary School
Ms. Weld**

You might not realize it but if you are silent while watching something that you know is not right then you might as well be the one doing it. This is what accrued too many times, during the era known as the Holocaust.

This was a period of time between 1933 -1945 where many people were treated differently because of their race, religion and physical appearance .The Holocaust might could have been prevented if all the by-standers would have done something different than what they did. Yes this was a very scary time for the Jews. But with over 400,000 Jews I think if a few people would have gotten together and decided that this is not fair and that no matter what the cost they were going to help, then they could have saved hundreds of people's lives.

I think many people wanted to help but were too scared. If more people would have been like Oskar Schindler who realized that the Nazis were treating the Jews terribly, he bought over 1,000 Jews to work in his factory. He didn't treat the Jews like the Nazis did. He fed them and was nice to them, he tried to buy as many as he could to save their lives. Many Germans knew that the concentration camps were unfair and choose not to be a part of any of it, for various reasons. The American government knew deep down about the horrible things the Germans were doing to the Jews. But what do you think is better? Not to do anything at all or to stand up for what you know is not right. Being a by -stander is never rewarding would you like to wake up every morning and think "would things have been different if I would have not remained silent?" Stand up for what you know is right and be known as a hero!

The Holocaust
By Joelle Carbonell
Elementary School 3rd place winner

The hungry, tired and enslaved Jews were being starved, tortured and killed in concentration camps during the Holocaust. But why wouldn't anybody even try to help the Jewish people escape from the Nazis? These were three main reasons why I think the non Jewish people didn't help the Jewish people during the Holocaust. First, people were afraid to help; second, they didn't know how to help; and third, they didn't want to get involved.

To begin with, non Jewish people were probably afraid to help the Jews. The Jewish people were being sent to concentration camps where they were killed by being put in showers that squirted poisonous gas. Even if they were not killed this way, the concentration camps were so crowded with people that disease spread quickly. Many Jew died in concentration camps because of disease, cold and hunger. The non- Jewish people might have heard of the things that were happening and may have been afraid that if they tried to help, they might be tortured in the same way. They may have been afraid that they would be sent to concentration camps and killed. They may have seen Jewish people killed in front of a crowd of people and were afraid this would happen to them. However, the non Jewish people may not have been helping, because they didn't know how to help, so they just didn't help out. Maybe the people who were not in the concentration camps did not know how to get them food or water or how to help them escape to some place where they would be safe from the Nazis. The non –Jewish people probably thought “What would be the consequences? Living without helping the Jews? Or, a painful death helping the Jews?” Most people chose not to help, so the Nazis continued to kill and torture Jewish people.

Other than these two things, the non Jewish people didn't help the Jews during the Holocaust because they did not want to get involved with the Jews trying to escape from the Nazis. If they thought about the consequences, they must have thought that the consequences would be really bad and that they themselves would be unable to escape from the Nazis. If the Nazis found out that they were helping the Jews, which they would eventually, they would be severely punished. They probably would have been sent to concentration camps.

Afraid to help, didn't know how to help and didn't want to get involved: these are the reasons why I think that people did not help the Jews during the Holocaust. After the long war, the Jewish people came out of hiding and those still living were able to leave the concentration camps. It was good to see them again.

Jennifer Berrian
First Place – 8th grade
Griffin Middle School

Adolf Hitler and his government viewed Jews as the source of Germany's troubles, so over the first several years of his reign as Chancellor, Hitler made preparations to remove Jews from society. After rearming Germany after its great depression, Hitler turned his sights on the Jews. It started with gradual exclusion from professional activities, segregation from residential sections and even prohibition of marriage between Germans and Jews. This led to the Jews being harassed, beaten, and persecuted. Hitler did not find these actions successful in removing the Jews from society. He also wanted to exterminate any other social, political, or religious group that integrated with the Jews. His impatience finally led him to create "The Final Solution" – the mass extermination of the Jews. Shootings, gas chambers and excruciating labor all befell the "inferior" Jews. My first question when I learned of the genocide that occurred in the Holocaust was: Where were the protesting people and the riots? They were right there, supporting, surrendering to, and enabling the genocide of an innocent group of people through their silence.

The silence of the people of the world symbolized their surrender to the Nazis. But how exactly did it fuel the Holocaust? Von Weizsaecker was the president of post-war Germany, lived through the war and the Holocaust, and was famous for his speeches on the subject, so as my mom would say, "He knows his stuff." As Richard von Weizsaecker says concerning the silence displayed during the Holocaust, "There were many ways of not burdening one's conscience, of shunning responsibility, looking away, keeping mum. When the unspeakable truth of the Holocaust then became known at the end of the war, all too many of us claimed that they had not known anything about it or even suspected anything." His quote shows only one example of how the people of Germany and the world surrendered to Hitler and the Nazis through their silence; they kept quiet, shunned responsibility, and turned the other cheek. When the "Final Solution" was introduced sometime in mid-1941, the people of the world stood back and let Hitler and his supporters systematically wipe out European Jewry. Hitler also went after the Communists, Catholics, Gypsies, Russian POWs, Poles, Jehovah's Witnesses, the disabled, the homosexual, and the African-German descendants. Where were the citizens of Europe? Right there, surrendering to the outright slaughter of these peoples through their silence.

The quiet of the people of Europe during the years of the war only further encouraged Hitler's annihilation of the Jews, who were innocent of all charges of war mongering, inferiority, racial impurity, and over representation in high professions. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, an active member of the German resistance movement against Nazism, was quoted for his belief on what silence truly is. "Silence in the face of evil is itself evil; God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act." Bonhoeffer held such a belief in the wrongs of staying silent through evil times that he even participated in an act to assassinate Hitler. The people of Europe and the rest of the world said nothing, but meekly went about their day, thus speaking their permission to massacre 11 million people, half of which were Jews. These same people did nothing, but stand to the side, therefore encouraging the slaying of the Jews and their supporters,

the homosexual, the physically and mentally disabled, the resisters and the sturdy in faith. The Anti-Defamation League talks of the French bishops' of the Catholic Church silence during the Holocaust in a press release. These French bishops apologized, on behalf of the entire French Catholic Church, for France's policies during World War II that allowed for the extermination of the Jews. And, still I ask, where were the people? And as always, the answer is right there; encouraging the execution of millions of people through their intolerable silence.

Keeping mum, as said by von Weizsaecker, enabled the Nazis to murder Jews and many other people of multiple society groups and religions. Martin Niemoller, an adamant pacifist and supporter of reconciliation, or reuniting between Germany and the rest of the world, is known for his famous quote on his guilt-filled part in the slaying. He said,

“In Germany, they came first for the Communists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Communist. Then they came for the Jews and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a Jew. Then they came for the trade unionists, and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist. Then they came for the Catholics, and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant. Then they came for me, and by that time no one was left to speak up.”

This quote puts in words how I believe the world and the people in Germany looked at the situation. They appeased their minds by telling themselves: “It's not us they're after. Why rock the boat?” It was not that they did not know what was happening; they just did not feel there was any reason to speak up or voice an opinion, even though the reasons were crystal clear. Adolf Hitler used this reasoning against the people of Europe. Their silence enabled Hitler to kill, assassinate, mutilate, and completely destroy multiple lives on charges of “racial impurity!” They stood back and allowed the horrible obliteration of innocent human beings.

Out of all the silence came a few resisters. There were resisters from Poland to Russian, from France to Germany itself, and there was resistance in the horribly inadequate ghettos. Abba Kovner, commander of an underground Nazi resistor organization, came before the delegates of a Jewish Youth Meeting and was quoted as saying, “Hitler is plotting to destroy all European Jews. Lithuanian Jews will be the first in line. Let us not be led like sheep to the slaughterhouse. It is right, we are weak and without defense, but the only answer to the enemy is resistance!” Kovner stands as only one example of the Jewish resistance of the Nazi Party and Hitler. Sadly, when compared to the millions of bystanders, the number of resisters was miserably small.

I no longer wonder where the people were, for as I've said quite a few times throughout this essay, they were right there. They just kept silent. The prompt of this essay asks why. I believe there are many reasons. One reason, the people felt that it was not their problem. They just did not feel there was any reason to speak up or voice an opinion about what was going on. Another reason, the European people were all, truthfully, scared out of their wits. If you helped or integrated in any way with the Jews, you became a Nazi resistor. If you resisted the Nazis, you were shipped off to a concentration camp where beatings and possible death awaited you. A third reason, the people were manipulated by Hitler into believing that the Jews and the Gypsies were

inferior, the Catholics and the Protestants only tried to make trouble, and the homosexual and the disabled did not deserve to live. The Germans were flattered into thinking that because they were Aryan, that they were actually the 'culture creators,' and other races, such as Africans, were 'culture destroyers.' The last reason, they did what so many of us today are guilty of: they shunned responsibility. The responsibility of a race, a religion, a social group was too much for them to hold on their shoulders. So, they turned the other cheek and kept silent.

When I think of the monstrosity we call the Holocaust, and the hush of the people, I feel sick to my stomach. I do admit that it takes a ton of willpower to even stand up in the classroom and object to a simple statement, but the knowledge of the execution of millions of people should motivate even the stoniest of hearts into action. The obvious truth is that the people of the world belittle themselves into living in corners and playing dumb. They knew what went on in the Holocaust, and no amount of silence, seclusion or austerity could change that. The fact remains that, as M. Cooley said, in the face of evil, "silence is the most intolerable of answers."

Willis John Bell
Second Place Winner
Swift Creek Middle School 6th Grade
Sponsor Teacher: Ms. Sharman Rodriguez

OBEY OR DIE!

Obeys or die! This sounds harsh but that is just what the German people were facing with Hitler in power. Hitler was not even put in power by German citizens. He slowly forced his way in and most people didn't even like him. His ruthless ways made most people feel powerless and fearful. When faced with the power and ruthlessness of Hitler and the Nazi party, ordinary people wouldn't stand up for what they knew was right for if they did they knew it could lead to death. I believe that the ordinary people remained silent during the Holocaust because they feared for the lives of themselves and their families, they felt powerless to make a change in the leadership of their nation, and sadly some believed the lies Hitler was telling about the Jewish people.

First I believe that people remained silent during the holocaust because they feared for their lives. Hitler and his Nazi party were evil. They would stop at nothing to accomplish their goal of wiping out the Jewish race. When Hitler came into power, he started making laws forbidding people to have anything to do with Jews such as sitting on the same park bench, shopping in Jewish owned stores, or inter-marrying. He continued by eventually taking away German citizenship from the Jews and barring them from public schools as well as other public places. He threatened people with death if they broke any of these laws. The rights of the Jewish people were slowly being taken away from them and they were losing everything they had. They were often rounded up and taken to work camps where they slowly died of diseases and hunger. Many times these work camps were death camps in which Jewish people were misled into believing they were getting a shower before being transported to another camp. In reality, they were walking into a gassing room where they were all killed. Many people remained silent because they did not want to be killed for breaking any of the laws that had been put into action by the Nazi party. Even Jewish people went along with the discrimination against them hoping that it would eventually end.

This brings me to my second point: ordinary people remained silent during the Holocaust because they felt powerless to change the leadership of the nation. Hitler saw himself as the future world leader and so did the rest of the Nazi party. As they legally gained more control of the Reich (or government) of Germany, they changed it to give more power to Hitler. Eventually, all power was drained from the people and Hitler was in total control. Hitler was so powerful he had control over every government organization including the German army. He even had his own Nazi army. The people of Germany did not hold the same powers. Some people tried to revolt but these revolts were unplanned and the people were not armed as well as the Nazis. These revolts were unsuccessful and often led to the death of the ones participating in them. No one had the power to stand up for what was right.

Sadly some people were confused about what was right and believed the lies that Hitler told. Hitler had amazing speaking abilities and could get anyone to hear and agree with what he was saying. Before he was in power, he was so good at speaking the

government banned him from public speaking for two years so that he would not win over any more people. This did not stop him. He and others invited people to private Nazi party meetings where he persuaded them to follow him. After the ban was lifted, Germany was going through a depression and people needed jobs and food. Hitler was the man promising them these things. His speeches included promises that would benefit everyone and people often heard what they wanted to hear. Hitler told lies about the Jewish people saying that they were the cause of all of Germany's problems. He also said that by getting rid of the Jews, they would get rid of the problems. This was easy for some people to believe because they grew up with some discrimination towards the Jews. I believe that some people remained silent during the Holocaust because Hitler persuaded them to believe his lies about the Jewish people.

“To remain silent in the face of evil is to surrender to it, encourage it and enable it to grow stronger.” In some cases people see no choice but to be silent. During the Holocaust, the evil had already grown strong and ordinary people remained silent because they were powerless against it. If they spoke out, they risked their life or the lives of their family. Some, however, believed the evil and didn't want to speak out against it or discourage it. This should be no excuse for letting a terrible tragedy like this happen again. If we are ever in the same situation, we should do all in our power and never give up trying to stop it. I leave you with this: As a soldier puts his life on the line for his country, wouldn't you do the same for innocent millions?

The Holocaust: Why Did People Remain Silent?

**Christina Notman
Trinity Catholic School
Seventh Grade
Middle School 3rd Place**

Throughout history, much discrimination has been shown toward different races and people of different religions. Undoubtedly, the most severely mistreated group was the Jews. One of the worst and widely known inhumane crimes was committed against the Jews during the post-WWI and WWII time period. This event is known as the Holocaust. We do not know exactly why people remained silent and allowed the Holocaust to happen, but we have several ideas. The Holocaust could have occurred because of blame, deception, fear, survival, isolation, gradually changed laws, and prejudice.

In January 1933, Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany. During this time he repeatedly accused the Jews for Germany's defeat in WWI and the economic hardships that followed. Hitler also put forth racial theories, such as, Germans with fair skin, blond hair, and blue eyes being the supreme race. Hitler's influence quickly spread among the people of Europe. They began blaming Jews for things that had nothing to do with them. The young children of Germany were also taught that the Jews caused all bad things in the world. Of course none of this nonsense was true, but the children, oftentimes, did not know any better.

Another possibility of why the Germans remained silent could have been because the students and citizens were almost being brainwashed. It was basically a game of deception. The deception was brought about by the use of propaganda. Under the direction of Propaganda Minister, Joseph Goebbels, Jews were portrayed as German enemies. Propaganda is the use of information, lies or exaggerations to reinforce a position. Anti-Jew slurs appeared in Newspapers, on posters, in the movies, on the radio, in speeches by Hitler and his top Nazis, and even in the classroom. Since birth, the German children in the Hitler era were bombarded with propaganda against the Jews. Many were trained as soldiers for the German army through the Hitler Youth Organization. Therefore, the young Germans knew nothing but hatred toward the Jews.

The German public was probably very afraid to stand up for the Jews because of what they saw happening to other Germans and to the Jews. To make people even more fearful, Hitler would have those who stood up to him punished in the streets. The Germans most likely started to join the Nazis because they probably thought they would be safe. The people of Germany probably did not do much for the Jews, because of fear. They might have wanted to help the Jews but they could not do much because there were too many people on the Nazis' side, always watching. Children were encouraged to turn in their parents or other family members that did not support Hitler. Again, the Germans were afraid of what would have happened to them if they helped the Jews.

Many actions were taken to promote the prejudices against the Jews, such as the gradual changing of laws. One day it would be Jewish children could only go to certain schools. The next week a law would be added stating Jews were only allowed to shop for

a few hours, late in the afternoon. The rules and restrictions of the Jews eventually got worse.

Following the gradual change of laws, came the isolation of the Jews. The isolation could have been that Jews had to live in certain parts of the cities known as “Ghettos”. The isolation could have also been that all Jews had to wear a symbol (usually a six point star) on their clothes indicating who they were.

Prejudice was present in almost all of the topics. Examples of prejudice were that in the year of 1935 Germans deprived the Jews of German citizenship. The Jews were removed from schools, banned from professions, excluded from military services, and were even forbidden to sit on the same bench as a non- Jew. The prejudices started out as not very many and then became uncountable. The other German citizens began to avoid the Jews. Non-Jewish Germans were not allowed to marry Jews. Germans with Jewish ancestry were looked down upon. Eventually the Jews had to go live in the “Ghettos” or in concentration camps. All of this occurred simply because of the great prejudices among people.

Even now, almost sixty years later, we do not know why the Germans remained silent and let the Holocaust occur. Adolf Hitler set the tone for what came to be a horrible crime against innocent Jews. With the ideas we have about blame, deception, fear, survival, isolation, gradually changed laws, and prejudice, we have a general idea of why people remained silent and let the Holocaust happen. This experience and event in time has taught most of society that prejudice is wrong. A wrong that we continue to struggle against even today as we interact with peoples and races other than our own.

Dana Edwards
First Place – 10th grade
John Paul II Catholic School

“We absolutely didn’t think Hitler and the Nazi party would go through with what they did. It never crossed our minds. We never thought it would happen. We [the Jews] considered ourselves as Germans. Our family members served in World War I; my grandfather fought in World War I with the Germans, too,” said Herbert Karliner, a Holocaust survivor from the SS St. Louis, the German cruise liner that sailed to Cuba in May 1939. People around the world watched as breakdowns in political compromise, strict immigration quotas among all countries and anti-Semitism resulted in refuge being denied to Jews aboard the ship. The refugees returned to Europe with only Britain, Belgium, France, and the Netherlands agreeing to offer a temporary safe haven for them. Like Karliner’s parents and two sisters, many SS St. Louis passengers were captured and killed when Hitler invaded the country where they sought temporary refuge. Hitler’s ultimate goal was to show the world that Jews were not welcome anywhere. The rejection of the Jews aboard the SS St. Louis became just one of many events during the Holocaust where people and nations remained silent and allowed the Holocaust to happen.

The Jews of Germany considered themselves to be Germans, not a separate category of “lesser” humans. When Hitler and his followers began to act on their cleansing plan, most of the Jews and other people around the world, who knew what was happening, thought the discrimination and public humiliation directed at Germany’s Jews would eventually stop. Jewish parents told their children the teasing and kicking in the streets were just temporary; Jews had experienced prejudice in the past.

As German anti-Jewish persecution increased, a number of Jews left Germany for other countries such as Cuba, the United States, France, and other nearby European countries. After *Kristallnacht* (“The Night of Broken Glass”) even more Jews attempted to leave Germany but were stopped by immigration quotas and the lack of flexibility in international immigration laws. Families had fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons taken to concentration camps the night of *Kristallnacht* while the women and children were left behind. Some men were killed in the camps and others were only allowed release provided they immediately left Germany. “Here is your husband,” the SS soldier told Herbert Karliner’s aunt as he handed her a small pastry box filled with ashes.

Hitler’s plan was to push all Jews out of Germany in order to see the response of other countries to Jews seeking refuge. His point of “no one wants the Jews, so I may do with them what I will,” was proven. During the 1938 Evian Conference, country after country expressed sympathy for the Jews, but only the Dominican Republic offered to take in additional refugees. Countries offered many excuses for not accepting more Jews and one country stated they did not have a “racial problem” and wanted to keep it that way.

German propaganda spread from country to country, arousing anti-Semitism in citizens. Hitler stated that it was the Jews who were causing the economic problems in Germany; eliminate the Jews and the problems would go away. The United States was just coming out of the Depression, as well as other economic issues caused from World War I, and most Americans were afraid that refugees would take jobs away from them – jobs that Americans were supposed to have. According to an April 1939 edition of *Fortune Magazine*, 83 percent of Americans did not want to lift immigration quotas and allow a larger number of European refugees into the United States. Only 8.7 percent said “yes” to allowing more refugees to enter the United States while another 8.3 percent “just didn’t know.”

Other Jews not living in German-occupied territories were reluctant to raise their voices, thinking that they, too, would be subjected to pogroms, concentration camps, and ghettos. Likewise, non-Jews were afraid to help, fearing for their lives as well as for the lives of their family members. Even though during the Holocaust the Jews were the largest population targeted, other population groups experienced prejudice and extermination: religious, gypsies, the disabled, homosexuals, and mentally ill. People who were caught attempting to hide or protect the persecuted received the same fate – death. World leaders attempted to pacify Hitler, cooperating with him in hopes that he would not invade their countries. For some, the horror slipped from their minds as the conflict was far away from where they lived and did not directly affect them. They thought it was best to ignore the issue in hopes it would eventually go away. The horror itself was too horrendous to comprehend; extermination camps, gas chambers disguised as shower rooms, 6 million Jews murdered, brutal labor, bins filled with body parts, giant ovens, and the smell of burning flesh. In being silent in the face of evil, people surrendered to it, which encouraged evil actions to continue and allowed anti-Semitism to grow stronger without allowing humanism and compassion to enter. When I asked my grandmother, who lived in Ohio at the time, she said that she did not know what was happening to the Jewish people in Europe until she saw the photos that came back from liberated Auschwitz.

We can learn from the horror survivors experienced by embracing the future in handling refugee conflicts. Recognizing similar early warning signs today may prevent hatred from growing strong in the future. Understanding the dynamics of local and national politics help individuals choose leaders wisely. If more people had read Mein Kampf, Hitler’s autobiography and introduction to his National Socialist political ideas at the time of its publication in 1925, they might have recognized his terrible plan for the future. Germans thought Hitler would save them from the poverty and inflation that were effects of the German reparations demanded for the costs of World War I. They never bothered to thoroughly check Hitler’s background. The German people became caught up in the German nationalism Hitler and the Nazis evoked.

“As a result from my experiences, I learned first-hand that love is the most important part of life. It is beyond religions. It defines the true religious experience,”

explains Judith Koeppel Steel, a Holocaust survivor from the SS St. Louis whose parents smuggled her from a holding camp into the Children's Aid Society (OSE) in France only days before they were murdered in Auschwitz. "We need to educate; there is not enough education about the Holocaust. We need to learn about each other, understand about each other, forgive each other, and then we will have peace in the world. I see it as my responsibility as a survivor to search and share experiences about it to help our world resonate into a peaceful world. Remembrance is the secret to redemption," emphasizes Steel.

Individuals, communities, and countries can make a difference by taking a more humane and compassionate approach to conflicts and negotiations. Embracing global healing and compromise through outreach sources such as the United Nations and refugee efforts can help develop an international conscience. Bishop John Ricard of the Pensacola-Tallahassee Catholic Diocese served as the Chairman of the Committee on International Policy for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. He has visited the Darfur region of Sudan many times and worked with Catholic Relief Services as well as the Sudanese government to protect its citizens. "The Darfur region in Sudan is rapidly becoming the newest symbol of human depravity and ethnic cleansing. Without greater attention and action by the international community, the world risks being a passive witness to yet another humanitarian catastrophe," says Bishop Ricard.

We must learn to recognize the same signs of conflict within our global society and promote tolerance, courage, and compassion in order to embrace universal responsibility and compromise. As Karliner states, "The challenges and conflicts of each generation are inescapable as long as people continue to disregard the lessons of history. The rectifications are universal education, tolerance, and rightful equality in economic inequities. I should also add to fight anti-Semitism which has been the generic medicine through history." Listening to survivors of conflicts reinforces the importance of making our decisions from a moral and humane standpoint. Intolerance in all its forms must be resisted. In the face of such evil, as many ordinary people as possible must take a stand for justice. We must never remain silent.

High School Winner 3rd place
Jeremiah McCallister
Wakulla High School
10th grade Ms. Murphy

The Power of Fear

It all began on November 9, 1938 when the true persecution of the Jews began. Even though the Nuremberg Race Laws had been set up three years before, outright violence against Jews in German land was uncommon. The Night of Broken Glass was the attack on all Jews by the German forces. This included the destruction of Jewish homes, businesses, and synagogues. The next day, thirty thousand Jewish men were arrested for their ethnicity and sent to concentration camps across German territory. At this point many wonder why the people of Germany did not speak up against this blatant racism in their country. The civilians could have done something to stop this injustice if they pleased, so why were they unresponsive? There are three main reasons for their inaction. Effective propaganda helped to convince the populace that Jews were not actual people, but something less. An overwhelming fear of punishment from German officials quelled many thoughts of rebellion in the people, and a lack of supplies and effective leadership made change almost impossible for civilians.

The best way to keep the population of a country hopeful during wartime is to have an effective propaganda campaign present in every part of common life. After the Nazi's had ended democracy and made Germany a dictatorship they instituted a country-wide propaganda campaign to win the respect and loyalty of the German people to their cause. They created the Nazi Propaganda Ministry and appointed Dr. Joseph Goebbels to lead the group. He spread the German anti-Semitic ideals through every area of popular media including books, newspapers, movies, and radio. This propaganda began many years before World War Two, around 1933 and continued throughout the war. The Nazis eliminated all things that they believed inspired free will and went against the Nazi ideas that their victory depended on. Nazi elites needed to destroy all the books at once so on May 10, 1933 German soldiers raided libraries and bookstores across the country and gathered all books that were considered illegal and they proceeded to burn them in the streets. More than twenty five thousand books were destroyed on that night. The propaganda did not affect only the adults. Germany needed a future of Jew-hating leaders, so it was also present in the school systems of German children. Old textbooks were removed and newly written books taught students the Nazi ways and demanded a love for Hitler. By constantly showing the teachings of the Nazis and anti-Jewish ideas in the face of the public they really had nothing else to believe, Joseph Goebbels led one of the most effective propaganda campaigns in the history of warfare. It wasn't that common Germans were aware that the Nazis were killing equal human beings. They believed that the Nazis were attacking a lesser race of people that deserved no respect and no pity because they were different.

Even if the intense Nazi propaganda forced on the public had been ineffective, it is still unlikely that a rebellion would have occurred. The Nazis were known not only for their effective war tactics, but also their extreme punishment of anyone that went against their will. The Germans were focused on wiping out the other ethnicities of the world, but

they were not above killing and torturing their own people for their cause. The Nazis used fear tactics as one of the strongest suppressants of rebellion in their lands. The Germans show of power in their invasion of Poland proved that they would show no mercy for their cause. The SS troops of the army entered the country and arrested any Polish citizen that showed resistance to their ways. It was clearly enforced that any German citizen found harboring Jews in their home faced arrest and possibly death. If a Jew was found in the home of a German the Gestapo would come and collect the Jews so they could be sent to a concentration camp and the Germans were immediately sent to jail. The Gestapo or 'secret state police' had the authority to do whatever they pleased and their only job was to investigate people and places that might be dangerous to the state of Germany. Their power was in the fear of their authority and that they could do whatever they wanted to do, when ever they felt it necessary. People were afraid to fight the government and this fear was a major problem that stopped them from rising up against their leaders. Germans also lacked the supplies necessary for a rebellion to occur in Germany.

Life in Germany was relatively normal until the turn of the war in 1941 because Hitler feared that a low morale in Germany may inspire rebellions throughout the country. However, in 1941 great pressure was applied to German civilians in order to help the war effort so Germany could turn the tide of victory to their side again. Women were forced to work long hours in factories, between ten and twelve. Many German civilians had to work at concentration camps by order of the government and they had no choice. Hitler even went as far as taking children from the Hitler youth and young girls known as 'girl guides' to do things like operate anti-aircraft batteries in cities like Berlin. Citizens were not able to revolt because the jobs that they were given always had German overseers watching their every move. The Nazis even forced people such as the mentally-ill and physically disabled to work as hard as the unhindered people. Since so many people were forced to work under such stressful conditions, many Germans died while working. A major place of death was in steel and munitions factories where citizens ranging from teenagers to the elderly had to deal with explosive and deadly chemicals on a daily basis. Hundreds of thousands of civilians died while working for the German cause. Considering that Germans watched over these people as they worked it would have been next to impossible to gather up enough supplies in order to start any kind of rebellion, let alone an effective one.

The common German population could have rebelled against the Nazi party during World War Two, but Hitler anticipated this and used many tactics in order to suppress this possible action. Pre-war propaganda led by Joseph Goebbels was effective enough to convince a majority of the population that Jews and other ethnicities were worthless and deserved no praise or respect. The fear instilled by the Gestapo and the threat of punishment allowed Hitler to operate without thinking of trouble from the masses, and the lack of supplies and constant surveillance from German officials made even planting the seeds for rebellion next to impossible. I believe that the Germans never rose up in defense of equality and justice during the Holocaust because they either believed nothing was wrong, or they lacked the courage and resources needed to act. Hitler was smart when he thought of pleasing the German population first before he headed to war, because that could have been what hurt him most.