SCHWAB HOLOCAUST WINNING ESSAY

We are pleased to include the co-first prize winning essay of the Schwab Holocaust Essay contest in the 8th-9th grade category. Dalia Shvartsman, an 8th grade student at the Silver Academy, answered the prompt "What can be learned about preventing genocide and mass atrocities through study of the Holocaust and other Nazi crimes?" We are very proud of Dalia and congratulate her on her outstanding essay.

Holocaust Essay

In life, you can always choose between two things: to run away from the past, or to move forward and learn from your mistakes. Today, the world has moved forward in many ways, but has it learned from its mistakes?

It is important to understand that the Holocaust didn't happen in one instant. It was a gradual buildup of events that started many, many centuries ago. If we can understand the process of how people allowed the Holocaust to happen in our history, then we can study it in order to never allow such an event to occur again.

First of all, what played a role in the events that led up to the Holocaust? Religious hate, economic difficulties, political propaganda, and indifference of people within the same country and of the world at large, are all major factors that progressed into the Holocaust.

The reason for mass murder often stems from religious intolerance and prejudice. Anti-Semitism first started when Christianity taught that Jews were to blame for the death of Jesus. That negative attitude toward the Jews continued in the form of domestic anti-Semitism (a form of anti-Semitism that can be very offensive, but does not formally violate the laws) even when religion no longer played a major role in the society.

Another reason that can create grounds hating other people is economic situation. After World War I, Germany's economic state was very poor. Jews often held high positions in the German society, so they were an easy target for being blamed for the bad financial situation of the country. Then, after Adolph Hitler came to power, he used the prejudices of the society against the Jews to make them a scapegoat for the situation in Germany. Hitler created propaganda, and people became convinced, consciously and unconsciously, that the Jews were to blame.

"If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it…" This quote is attributed to the Minister of Propaganda of Nazi Germany, Joseph Goebbels. The Nazi propaganda became very effective on many people. Looking back at the Holocaust, we learn that we have to be very alert when hearing and seeing things on social media, television or through "word of mouth". We need to be able to recognize when the things we are seeing are "dangerous seeds" and try our best to eradicate them and make other people aware of it.

One of the things that the Nazis did at the beginning of their rule was to segregate the Jews, that is, exclude them from the society. Segregation has occurred many times in the history of different cultures even after the time of the Holocaust; it has led to mass atrocities and mass murder. For example, in American history, segregation of the African Americans led to many tragedies and deaths.

Bullying is an example of unreasonable hatred that happens in schools every day. People are bullied because of their appearance, disabilities, and for many other reasons. And like in the Holocaust, people witness it every day. Kids in school often see other kids being bullied, but are too scared to stand up to the bully. So, it continues and builds up for a long time.

Today there are still survivors of the Holocaust - people who saw with their own eyes the horrible results of this monstrosity of hatred. The Holocaust was so horrific that some people try to forget about it. Some people even deny that it happened. With fewer and fewer survivors, the Holocaust may eventually become just a legend. For that reason, it is so important to remember the Holocaust and the lessons that we learn from it. We need to watch ourselves that we don't hate others even if we can find a "justification" for it. The Holocaust has shown to the world what propaganda, ignorance, and hatred can lead. We learn from the Holocaust that we must not be afraid to stand up for what is right before it is too late. We cannot let our race and religion prevent us from uniting together as humanity. All of human kind from all around the world must help each other; only then can we move forward as a people and do great things. Today, the Holocaust serves as an example and constant reminder to treat everyone with dignity and respect, and the importance of helping others in need.

Maybe the world has learned something from its past mistake, a major mistake: allowing the Holocaust to happen. But nothing guarantees that it will never occur again, not if we allow it to. Only we have the power to prevent it by educating others about what happened in the Holocaust, and not letting the next generation forget about it.