Dear Governor Inslee,

Washington State schools should require Holocaust education. The Holocaust elicits a feeling of grief, heartache, and tragedy. In Nazi Germany, a state-sponsored genocide resulted in the systematic murder of six million European Jews. The Nazi Regime also murdered Romani, homosexuals, the disabled, and people of color. Despite the Holocaust occurring in WWII, the war did not cause it. The war served as a facade for the genocide of the Jewish people. What could have led to this? Violence of this nature emerges from prejudice founded on ignorance and fear. The Holocaust has the power to raise awareness about injustices across the globe.

Nora Eilenberg was a survivor who experienced the Holocaust first-hand. She stated, “Nobody should go through what we went through. Never again. We should not forget. We should remember. It can happen anywhere, even in the United States.” Their stories are worthy of telling. Forgetting would mean dishonoring their memory and experiences. Hate crimes and demagogues have risen throughout the nation. As decades of suffering pass us by, they leave behind the scars endured during harsh, distressing lives. Regardless of our differences, we must not allow history to repeat itself. We cannot forget or deny the past. Hence, Washington State schools should mandate Holocaust education. Without proper teaching, students will not grow up to become the leaders we need to change the world. A curriculum on the Holocaust would provide ways to combat and recognize prejudice. But why must we acknowledge the risks of prejudice?

First of all, prejudice is a harmful stereotype about members of a community. An example of prejudice is racism. Hate crimes against Asian Americans have soared due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The virus's roots in China have resulted in a spike of derogatory and racist language aimed at them. Former President Trump sparked this by scapegoating Chinese people for the Covid-19 outbreak. As claimed by CBS News and Business Insider, he used the terms “Chinese virus” and "Kung flu” to describe coronavirus. This profoundly appalling and foul behavior needs to stop. In nineteenth-century Europe, Jews became known as an "inferior" race. Adolf Hitler blamed the Jewish people for Germany’s economic troubles. He used posters, comics, articles, essays, and films to propagate anti-Semitism. The Swastika became the most recognizable form of propaganda. People used it as a symbol of good luck but later became connected to German nationalist pride in 1920. These propagandas exacerbated preexisting
biases and reinforced anti-Semitic attitudes. Prejudice can nurture hate organizations and spread propaganda to victimize a minority group.

Additionally, fear catalyzes prejudice. Islamophobia, for example. After the devastating events of 9/11, citizens scrutinized the Muslim community. Following the terrorist attacks, the country quickly shunned Muslims. The media often portrays Islam as aggressive, which generates plenty of hostility. Hundreds of photographs depict them as vicious and cruel. These false portrayals can lead to people participating in hate crimes against Muslims. By informing students about the Holocaust, they learn how to distinguish the truth from disinformation.

Furthermore, ignorance becomes a consequence of fear. It frequently has a negative effect rather than a positive one. When individuals turn ignorant, they become egotistical, oblivious, and indifferent. According to USA Today, “Almost two-thirds of millennials and Gen Zers don’t know that 6 million Jews were killed in the Holocaust and almost half can’t name a single concentration camp.” That naiveté can veer into blind anti-Semitism. Teaching the Holocaust could encourage children to become less disconnected and more perceptive of their surroundings.

Finally, the Holocaust teaches us to Never Forget. As human beings, we must continue striving for positive change through education, acts of compassion, and courage. We must fight all forms of prejudice, racial or religious intolerance, and hate. Like Kalynn Bayron, an author, said, “Do not be silent. Raise your voice. Be a light in the dark.”

Sincerely,

Stephanie Courtright
WORKS CITED:


Miller, Ryan W. “Almost Two-Thirds of Millennials, Gen Z Don't Know That 6 Million Jews Were Killed in the Holocaust, Survey Finds.” USA Today, Gannett Satellite Information

