

Year 10 Holocaust Excursion - Skye Hagland

Expectations of the excursion

For those of you who don't know, the year ten-holocaust excursion was a trip for all year ten students to the Jewish Holocaust Museum and it was safe to say that most of the year ten-student body had never been to this kind of museum, so general expectations were vague. Overall many of the students thought it would be watching a documentary then wandering around a museum looking at pictures and artifacts. But once entering the museum we all found that it was so much more than that.

Documentary

To start the excursion we were sat down in a large room in front of a projector. There we watched a 10 – 15 minute documentary about the holocaust. This documentary's objective was not to spit out numbers and facts but to put faces and people to those numbers. To make us commemorate the people that were killed instead of generalizing them. It is easy to say that the documentary was successful. When looking around the room almost all of the students had tears in their eyes if they weren't already crying.

Abram's Story

Abram was born in Poland, Lodz. Out of 700,000 inhabitants, a third of the population of Lodz was Jewish. "With the outbreak of the war on the 1st of September 1939 it was a Friday, 5:00 in the morning we heard the first bomb fall. Only seven days afterwards the following Friday the Germans marched into the city of Lodz and of course life changed completely."

In 1940 the Lodz ghetto was completely fenced off from the rest of the city and guarded by sentries. German police and those who guarded the ghetto would very often amuse themselves and take the rifle and make men and women and child a moving target; Just aimed and shot. Many people were murdered that way. Once we were enclosed in the ghetto life became impossible. The hunger was so great. "But as long as they didn't kill us physically we never contemplated giving up."

In September 1942 the Nazis ordered a mass deportation, 20,000 Jewish people were sent to the Chelmno death camp. Before 1942 when there was the biggest action in the ghetto Abram lost his entire family apart from his mother. Abram and his mother survived the next two years in Lodz, enduring hunger and managing to avoid a number of deportations, until the final liquidation of the ghetto in August 1944. They went into hiding and they were able to hide out for four weeks. His mother eventually couldn't take it any longer and came up with a proposition that Abram should go in hiding and she would present herself for deposition. "I couldn't let my mother go on her own." The last words his mother said to him before they were separated were "Abe you should do everything humanly possible to survive and when you will survive and where ever you will be or find your self you should tell people what was happening to us and what was done to us because by knowing people will be able to prevent this from happening to anyone else." He had lost the last member of his family. "I was in hell for the next three months." "You can imagine when you saw 24 hours the chimneys of the crematoriums belching out smoke...and you could smell the burning flesh." December 1944 Abram was sent to the first of many camps in Germany where he was liberated on the second of May 1945 by the US army "



Student interview

What did you think of the excursion?

It was really good to see it and hear it first hand instead of staying in school and reading or researching about it.

What made it so special to hear the story from the perspective of a survivor?

To hear his experiences was heartbreaking, it's horrible to know that a whole religion went through something so terrible and for a man who experienced all the monstrosities and survived to tell his story and still be happy and grateful about his life it really inspiring to say the least

Was there anything in particular that stood out to you that had any particular importance?

For me it was Abe's speech and the message his story left with me, which is not to hate because it will only destroy you and the ones you love. That is one of the things that will stay with me forever.