Why Holocaust Education?

Spokane residents, Carla Peperzak (left) and the late Eva Lassman (right), share their Holocaust stories with local students

CONTEXT:

The Holocaust was the most extensive planned and executed genocide in recorded history. In 1933 Adolf Hitler and the Nazi Party came to power in Germany. They cultivated long-standing fear and hatred for “non-Aryans” to rally the German people to wage war against the rest of Europe. A central objective of the Nazis was to rid the world of people they deemed either inferior or a threat -- Roma, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Communists, homosexuals, people with disabilities, and particularly Jews. When World War II ended in 1945, the Nazis and their collaborators had exterminated 11 million people, of whom 6 million were Jews. Two-thirds of the entire Jewish population of Europe (1/3 of the world’s Jewish population) was eradicated.

Study of the Holocaust provides a unique opportunity to learn how hatred and intolerance can progress to genocide. But the subject receives little attention in most Inland NW schools.

PROMPT:

Why is it important for students to learn about the Holocaust?

Instructions

(1) Find out as much as you can about the Holocaust by reading and viewing videos, including survivors’ testimonies, provided in the REFERENCES and/or by your teacher.

(2) Write a persuasive essay or poem explaining:
   a. Why it is important for all students to learn about the Holocaust.
   b. How studying the Holocaust and learning from survivors’ testimonies empowers you and your fellow students to make a difference in your school, communities or world.
REFERENCES:
An easy-to-read overview of the Holocaust (link) -- 15-20 minutes
Videos about the Holocaust:
   “I’m Still Here” (2013) (link) – the Holocaust told through the diaries of Jewish teens 48 minutes.
   “Survivor Voices: Bearing Witness from the Holocaust to Today” (2021) (link) by Seattle’s Holocaust Center for Humanity – 26 minutes.
Testimonies of Washington State Holocaust Survivors, including Spokane’s Carla Peperzak (link)
Narratives and videos of various lengths.

AWARDS:
(1) All winners of the high school and middle school divisions will be announced to their schools and the 1st place submissions will be published in The Spokesman-Review.
(2) The winners will receive the following scholarship awards:
   1st Place High School Division: $400  
   2nd Place High School Division: $250  
   3rd Place High School Division: $100  
   1st Place Middle School Division: $250  
   2nd Place Middle School Division: $150  
   3rd Place Middle School Division: $75

RULES:
(1) The contest is open to all high school and middle school students in the Inland Northwest.
(2) Your essay or poem can be up to about 1000 words, double-spaced, in either Microsoft Word, Google Docs (include permission to view!), or body of an email.
(3) Sources must be cited, preferably at the end of the essay. They will not be included in the word count.
(4) On a separate cover page, type your name, phone number, email address, school name, grade, and your teacher’s name.
(5) Email your entry to:
   neveragain-spokane@comcast.net before midnight Sunday, May 1, 2022.
(6) Submissions will be judged by the Spokane Community Observance of the Holocaust Planning Committee based on responsiveness to the prompt, originality, content, evidence that you have used the references, spelling and grammar, and accuracy of information.
(7) The Committee reserves the right to disqualify any submission that has inappropriate or plagiarized content.
(8) The winners will be announced by Tuesday, June 7, 2022.